

**SPECIAL MEETING OF WICKLOW COUNTY  
COUNCIL HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS  
MEETING**

**ON**

**MONDAY 21st MARCH 2022 AT 2:00 P.M.**

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**Chris Brower**

**Elaine McCarthy**

CATHAOIRLEACH: Hello, first and foremost I'd like to send best wishes to Shay Cullen. Can I just say I hope you can bear with me today, I've been thrown in the deep end here, on the way up here I was reflecting if I was in Ukraine wouldn't we be a lot worse, so bear with me today and we can get through this meeting, I'd appreciate that very much so.

We're ready to go. We'll do roll call Teresa.

HELEN: Yes.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Helen, that's a great start, I apologise.

HELEN: I'd like to welcome the press and the public; it is great that you're there. Everybody's very welcome. I would remind people as per the etiquette members of the public and press should keep their microphones and cameras off. And the elected members if you could keep your microphones off while not speaking it would be - appreciate it. Roll call:

HELEN: Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Helen.

So, first on the agenda is to discuss, motion from Cllr Gerry O'Neill and Cllr Joe Behan.

Cathaoirleach has asked a technical team would they give a presentation on this motion for the members that aren't in the Baltinglass area. So could I have the motion please.

Margaret?

Is Margaret here?

Margaret's going to do it online.

HELEN: I'll read the motion again. (Helen reads out agenda point one).

The presentation is now ready to go.

MARGARET: So, Blessington Greenway, can everyone hear me.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Can you hear me now? I'll speak clearer and how about Helen now?

HELEN: Can you hear me now.

MARGARET: Can you hear me now?

HELEN: We're having technical issues, please bear with us please.

MARGARET: Can you hear me now?

ALL: It is a bit better.

MARGARET: Can everybody hear me?

CHAIR: Sorry, we can't hear you in the chamber, and I don't know if anybody at home can hear it.

>>: No, we can't hear at home.

>>: It seems when she comes closer to her microphone, we hear her but aware from it we can't.

HELEN: We're in contact with Margaret now. It shouldn't be too long.

MARGARET: Can everybody hear me now. Thank you.

OK. Apologies for that. So, just on the Blessington Greenway, just to give a bit of background to that: Teresa if you wouldn't mind going on to the next slide.

So just in terms of the project description, the community led project with the section done already carried out by the local community. That's 6.5 kilometres done from the Avon hotel out.

The scheme is proposed to provide a predominantly off-road shared use path for pedestrians and cyclists. The scheme will be approximately 33 kilometre and involve the provision and upgrading of a Greenway aegis sent to the Shoreline of the Blessington Lake special protected area. Which is as you know is known as SPA. If you link to the villages and towns, it comes to 40 kilometres in total.

As part of the project, traffic lights proposed at the three existing bridges, three bridge crossings to manage a new shuttle system for vehicle later traffic.

In terms of the next slide please.

The status of the project in July 2017 Wicklow County Council obtained Part 8 approval to construct a Greenway around the lakes. The scope of the works for the project triggered the need to review the environmental reports undertaken to date. Which has led to the project requiring a Natura Impact Statement, NIS for short and planning submission to An Bord Pleanála. The documents were lodged with An Bord Pleanála with public consultation commencing on the 20th of January 22.

Just to give an idea of the kind of three bridges were trying to cross over with the scheme this, is one at Valleymount and I wanted to put up a photograph to show you the width of the existing bridges.

In terms you can see there, it is tight even in terms of two-lane traffic and you have the gap between the barrier for pedestrians, and one side has virtually nothing the barrier is tight up against and the other side it is just about enough for a person to walk through and that wouldn't be, that would be a person walking, this wouldn't be with a buggy or wheelchair accessible or cyclist, so I wanted to give an idea what the existing bridges look like. Next slide. In terms of the bridge,

the bridge options we looked at for this project, you can see the current bridge layout on the top, that's two lanes pretty much on one side for pedestrian. That pedestrian accessibility in the right-hand-side. So that's the current bridge layout and in terms of the options looked at, option one was a shared foot way and cycleway with one lane of carriageway, this option, would, so this is reduced down the carriageway to one lane and that would need traffic lights. But this involves work to remove and replace the safety barrier that's already there, as I showed you in the previous slide so it would need structural assessment to do that. Option two is morals the same. Option two would need traffic lights as well but deliver a dedicated space, for all for the Greenway users, and does not require touching the safety barriers, so not structural assessment, so that's the most feasibility at this moment in time and gives a safe area for all those users, cyclists, and pedestrians.

Option three, which is the extension to extend out the bridge to accommodate cycleway and segue and two lanes of carriageway, this means adding on a bit on the bridge. Option three, this would require construction investigation to confirm feasibility for that option and is deemed to be outside of the scope of this project at this time in terms of funding timing and planning, this would require a big new environmental assessment as it is over the special protective area.

Option four is doing nothing so cyclists would be accommodating on the existing bridge layout so as you can see there, option four, equivalence limited, a not a safe option, unsatisfactory and doesn't meet the scheme objectives. And for a Greenway and does not provide a safe facility for the cyclist and not really for the road, the other users because only one person walks through with the economic situation. So, they're the options as it stands. The other option that was considered was to provide underpass at cock Kieran bridge, these underpasses would still, the traffic lights with the option and need to control the traffic it would be envisaged it would be a land take to facilitate the Greenway to access the underpasses and environmental assessments so land take and environmental assessments

that option as well would still need the traffic lights, even if those underpasses were to be looked at and were feasible.

In terms of then, the pretty much the option the Preferred Option, option put forward was option two. So, in order to provide the infrastructure, the carriageway need to be narrowed to single lay to lead in direction of the across the bridge, and to control when traffic can cross without conflicting with opposing traffic, traffic lights needed to manage that, so to make sure they don't conflict on the existing lane. And that, those lights would be needed 24 hours, seven days a week.

A cycle time of less than 90 seconds would be on the bridges, which is a driver will have to wait 90 seconds before getting a green light again. Based on the current assessment it is anticipated that on average there will be three vehicles waiting at the traffic lights at any one time. Expert modelling results show there's no capacity concerns with the introduction of the shutting working on the bridges.

Furthermore, to this, that the new traffic lights signals could operate using sensors as you see on many roads now, there are sensors on the traffic lights and what these are, used to detect traffic rather than timing, so it picks up on the traffic crossing so these would be installed in order to ensure waiting times are minimised on the bridges. That's when a vehicle arrives on the bridge a sensor will detect it and sensor the lights to green to allow traffic to pass the bridge. In terms of night-time driving because the lower volumes at night-time we'd envisage a lot of the time as driver comes through that person would get a green light and get through, so it would minimise the time waiting at a traffic light.

Just the next slide. Just in terms of I know some of the council is worried about the width of the lane what, we can do is also adjust the lane the width of the secular lane, or just that lane so it can accommodate larger agriculture vehicles. Just to give examples of this already in use, there's one this, is one on the N80, there's traffic lights there on the bridge and it has larger volumes than the bridges we're dealing with. But

in general, just from people we've heard in the area who drive through that, it doesn't seem to have a huge impact on the traffic going through.

There's another example there on the N2 slain, and the next slide please. This bridge is also one on the N2 in slain and AADT, annual average daily traffic of 7,000 vehicles.

Which is Valleymount Bridges AADT of 1,743, the average daily traffic so as you can see the volumes on the N2 are dramatically larger than the Valleymount bridge. Similar to our bridges, 250 metres, that's what is put in place on that bridge and seems to be working in fine in terms of controlling traffic going through there.

I know some of the councils were talking about the traffic counts taken in May 21, while these were during restrictions, they were, the schools were open and counter travel was allowed, and traffic counts back in Lacken back in 2018, are similar.

In terms of safety, I suppose this option provides safety for all the road users, people with young children, cyclists, pedestrians, and people with disabilities, in terms of Fáilte Ireland, segregation this, is one of their latest, segregation away from secular traffic is a priority for users. Segregation is one of Fáilte Ireland's goals for Greenways and one of the five Ss, scenic, sustainable, lots to see and do and strategic and segregation, segregation is one of the fives needed for a full proper Greenway.

So, I suppose the next slide in terms of if that was just in terms of the potential consequences the scheme does not proceed, there's no options at this moment in time, for the bridges other than what we put forward. I suppose there's potential loss of 15 million by not including the bridges and traffic lights the Greenway would not be classed as a Greenway and risk the TIA funding, the potential loss of one million the risk to the Blessington rural, RRDF, application included in becoming Greenway ready initiative. There's also a loss of tourism and economic opportunity presented by the Greenway and potential users this will attract.

Detrimental effect to the council's reputation with the department. Risk to department's confidence in the council's ability to deliver major Greenway scheme and this could impact on all schemes we have in the county.

As further one minor point expenditure to date in the region of 1 million the department could seek monies claimed to be returned if this scheme did not proceed.

Just in terms of the impact on local community, its acknowledged that the lights will result in a short delay to the local community closing bridges on the daily communities. The scheme is hugely beneficial to the local community and the county at large on many levels including economic, health and welfare and improvement to the connectivity between the surrounding villages and towns

In terms it of public consultation, this has continued with the ABP formal process which commenced 20th January 22 and closed 4th March 22, the submissions made will be received over the next coming weeks, from the An Bord Pleanála and will be available for public viewing. They can be discussed with a project team if required. Moving forward, it is proposed to form a new project liaison group, this will assist with information and sharing and engagement with all stakeholders in the local area watch sincere councillors, IFA, local business reps, WCC staff and local community groups.

Then in terms, to wrap it up in terms of just facts on the E Greenway, the 15 million investments in the new Greenway with more to follow will give a huge boost of the economy of Blessington and the villages and around the lakes and throughout west Wicklow. Economic studies on the experience elsewhere, shows that green ways bring significant opportunities for existing businesses to expand and creation of new once, this means sustainable jobs for local families throughout the Lakeside area. This is the first funded major Greenway loop in Ireland. This development has been over ten years in the making and is a prime example of a community-led, ground-up initiative. It seems to enhance health, social/community interaction, and mental wellbeing, it has been designed to the highest safety and universally accessible



standards. In full compliance with all ecological and cultural and heritage requirements.

Traffic lights with modern sensor systems will be installed on three main bridges to provide safe crossing for both Greenway users and all types of vehicles. The stop on the red for vehicles will be no longer the 90 seconds and detailed studies carried out by our traffic experts to show this will no cause congestion, apart from the bridges all route is off road and substantially on ESB owned land against to the lakeshore. Since the existing Greenway, created by the Blessington and district community forum created over eight years ago it has been proven to be successful and both users and local landowners N a new Greenway visitor hub will be created in Blessington at the former health board building.

That's the end, and if there's any questions on any of that.

I'll take them.

CHAIR: Thank you Margaret, we have additional information, I'd like to hand you over to the Chief Executive and we all got this information on Saturday evening. Thank you.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thank you Cathaoirleach. As referred to by the Cathaoirleach, we did seek a second legal opinion on the matter, what was circulated last Saturday evening. We have three legal opinions, we've two senior counsel opinions and our own law agent. All three legal opinions, concur that the resolution, section 140 notion is void and that the Chief Executive cannot lawfully be directed to withdraw this application.

So, I think that's crystal clear, three separate legal opinions saying the motion is invalid and unlawful and therefore, cannot. In addition, in the council is legally obliged to lodge a section 177 application to plane An Bord Pleanála and no legal, and statutory provision in place to withdraw an application. I'm aware e-mail has been circulated by Cllr Gerry O'Neill in relation to on official from An Bord Pleanála confirming

that it could be withdrawn, but the fact of the matter is official of An Bord Pleanála, a view that application be withdrawn does not confer on the council any right to do so. Any attempt to withdraw, application would leave the council exposed to a potential judicial review going forward, power to withdraw is not established by the board, by legislation, there no legal provision within the current legislation for the application, but at the end of the day the argument over whether an application can be withdrawn or not withdrawn, is moot to be honest, because at the end of the day section 140 motion, is clearly void and unlawful. And we cannot proceed on that basis Thank you Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I'd like to bring in Cllr Gerry O'Neill at this stage if possible. You put this motion forward so,

CLLR O'NEILL: Can I start, I did send e-mail in there, to Helen earlier on, and if you could, if you get Helen to read it for the benefit for all the councillors in the chamber or at home.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes OK, Helen will read that out now.

HELEN: E-mail is from Jennifer at An Bord Pleanála to Cllr Gerry O'Neill stated 15th of March at 8.26 and it says "Dear Gerry, further to your e-mail below to my colleague Sean McGee, the Council asked me to advise you it is open to Wicklow County Council at any stage of the application process to withdraw the application. To do this, Wicklow County Council must send a letter to the board saying they are unconditionally withdrawing the application. Kind regards Jennifer." And the e-mail preceding that was from Cllr Gerry O'Neill sent on the 11th of March, and as it said "Hi Sean, just to follow up on our phone conversations of Monday, and Tuesday of this week, where you clarified the local authority can withdraw the Greenway application at any time (An Bord Pleanála 312479/22) if you e-mail me this information accordingly, I am a Wicklow County Council councillor in the Baltinglass Municipal area, yours in kindness, Cllr Gerry O'Neill.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Helen. Gerry.

CLLR O'NEILL: Thanks again Tommy and I wish you the best of luck there toed, you're in the chair, and could I just say that thanks to Helen for the presentation, not Helen, Margaret.

It is clear there from two weeks ago, that the question was my phone call valid as such, when I rang An Bord Pleanála an hour before the meeting and they told me at that time the local authority could withdraw this.

I followed that up as Helen mentioned there with an e-mail, and it clearly states in the e-mail that this was advice from the board, it wasn't just an individual in the office or wherever, it clearly states it is from the board. Having got the advice from An Bord Pleanála, that they point out it can be withdrawn at any time.

And, so, it seems to be conflicting here, that legal advice and I believe Edmond Keane, senior counsel is employed by the council and our own law ought, so I don't think, this is not straightforward by the look of it. But in my view it can be withdrawn, but can you point out again and again, and again, I proposed Part 8 a few years ago on this, and I've been very active in regards to I promoted a Greenway, I went around different individuals around the lakeside over the years, some with Frank Curran, to encourage local people to get involved I put the Part 8 forward and it was second Jim Rutland. After that it was more of a we went through a couple of years, there wasn't much more mention of the Greenway as such. The next thing I heard it was an E Greenway, I don't know why the "he" came into it, and I don't know why we dropped the Part 8, I do know the Part 8 was democratically put in place by the members of Wicklow County Council. But I don't remember any time that it was put to Wicklow County Council to withdraw the Part 8.

On the issue there, of ...

Our problem here in this area, and I am a Blessington-based councillor, is we had no notice of this whatsoever. The only notice we got was in a Town Team meeting in December.

The application was lodged on the 14th of January, and we also got the plan, hard copy of the plan the same day.

So, we got no chance whatsoever to discuss this, indeed our local officials in west Wicklow, weren't consulted whatsoever. So can I point out the issues we were worried about, from the 14th of January on, are the lights on the bridges, and you know, I revert back to Margaret later on here down the St Joseph's Hall where a section of the roadway completely pedestrianised and for cyclists that will wipe out in my view 14 businesses. Most of them have expressed their concern to me that it is not fair, that it is totally wrong. There is actually a Doctor of Surgery on that road. There is nowhere to park. As I said on other occasions, we're at the mercy of An Bord Pleanála here if it goes through as, it is. I asked before and I got no answer, the health centre was brought up for a hub for the Greenway and it's probably in the craziest place.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, Gerry, I'm going to have to speed you along because you're well over your three minutes -

CLLR O'NEILL: As a proposal at one point in time. If you don't want to hear me..

CATHAOIRLEACH: I do want to hear you - we'll bring you back in -

CLLR O'NEILL: I'll hurry as much as I can. I'll hurry as much as I can. You know, with all due respect, let me present my motion.

The HSC Building on the road was bought I've asked already what that cost. I'm not quite sure. It's a crazy place to have it. That bit of parking outside this new hub would be - the traffic will be from here on in if this goes through, the bit of parking we have out there will be gone so I don't know what that hub is doing there at all. The Greenway is not there. The Greenway is on the lakeside. I don't know what is there.

The other issue and I'll be as quick as I can, Tommy, is the issue of Part 8 clearly stated the town land can be taken in to accommodate the Greenway and one of those towns was ^ Dunvaris. I have objected before at council level; I have made it be known that I don't agree with public money being spent on a private enterprise. This loop of the Greenway is running from the far side of the bridge on public road out to the hotel, the golf resort. That was never part of Part 8.

Now that's thrown in. Again, we had no chance to argue that point, you know.

Could I just also find out, a few points Margaret asked if there were any questions there. The traffic survey that was carried out in May 2021 was at the height of COVID and there were three bridges involved here. But if you look at the Knockeiran Bridge, for example, that was taken on the bridge itself, that survey. There are four roads leading to that bridge. And I absolutely - and nobody accepts it - there is a 90-second delay on that. That's wrong.

Most importantly with that bridge is the safety aspect. I hope my fellow councillors read up on the report. But this is probably the worst part of the plan, where in the centre of that bridge now it's proposed to put a 3-inch in diameter plastic poles fixed to the ground so you have people in wheelchairs, people on bicycles, young children walking and right beside there within inches of them there are no barriers to stop them straying off to the other side of the road [inaudible], you know, it's a crazy thing. The issue of the N81 there, as I pointed out before, that's not fair -

CATHAOIRLEACH: I have to stop you now because we're not discussing the Greenway here now, we're discussing this motion, OK? But very much, Gerry. I will give you an opportunity to come back from.

I'm going to hand you over to the Chief Executive now, Gerry. Thank you.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: I just wanted to thank Cllr O'Neill for his comments. Just to clarify the issue again about the email from An Bord Pleanála. I did reference it in my summary there, and I'll just reiterate it again. The fact that An Bord Pleanála said you can withdraw it. They didn't say whether it was legal to withdraw it or not [inaudible] and Local Government Act. The fact of the matter is we have two senior counsel and a law agent all concurring with the fact that to withdraw it is illegal and would leave the council open to potential legal action against us if we progress in that matter.

As I said already, the actual motion, the Section 14 is void and it's unlawful and it's in breach of Section 140.10 of that particular Act. So regardless about the argument of having to withdraw or not to withdraw, it's void and unlawful the motion and I cannot be directed to act on it. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Can I bring in Cllr Snell next? Can you speak clearly into your microphone?

CLLR SNELL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and for chairing this meeting. At a time, I know it's very difficult for him personally over the last number of weeks and I'm sure all the members concur, and we wish his wife Kathy well and a speedy recovery after being taken from the home in the last few hours by ambulance. You can well appreciate it is a difficult issue for the people that are closest to this. Cllr O'Neill is the closest elected member to the longest bridge we're talking about. It's three times the length of the bridge in Arklow, Cathaoirleach. I said it last day and I don't want to go over all ground, but the reality is that it's not right. This started in 2018 and I know Margaret gave a good presentation. I want to thank Margaret for her presentation. But I don't believe that she herself would agree with some of the stuff that she read out because, as was outlined there, we want to stick to the Greenway, the Greenway itself. 100 percent of the people agree with her. And this talk of money being lost or, you know, not being secure, it's lost to the county, or the West don't want to give it to the East, we heard that last meeting, that's all nonsense. The people of the West want this. The people of County Wicklow want this. The only thing they're disputing is the three bridges which had never come up from 2018 up to 2022. Never come up. And they're also disputing the loss of the car parking spaces. And again, I say we're putting the cart in front of the horse.

This project liaison group that is being proposed to assemble together now made up of public representatives, businesses, the IFA, community groups. There were six public meetings in West Wicklow with the Cathaoirleach and a number of other councillors were at and all of those groups I mentioned voiced their opinion they weren't consulted, and they were talking about putting this project liaison group together. Almost four years after the project was approved by the then councillors, such as Cllr Jim Rutland and other councillors from West Wicklow, I'm sure they'll come and speak for themselves. For four years, a special protection area we're talking about. We're talking about, you know, going against the grain here. We're 32 public representatives and it's our job to come in here and relay what the public want. Somebody decided that this was the best thing to do. Not on behalf of the public, not on behalf of the businesses, the IFA, the community groups or otherwise. Somebody did in this building and put this in there without consulting with the elected members. I think that's not acceptable. I think that today we need to send a clear message out that we don't want this no more. We don't want to be here two days talking about something like this where there's a municipal district who

could have been brought to the Blessington area office or the Baltinglass area office and go back to the public with their plans and ideas.

Cathaoirleach, Cllr O'Neill was questioned, and we spent two and a half hours discussing the email from An Bord Pleanála. I accept what the Chief Executive is saying that his interpretation might be different from what the board sent out, it's not legal or otherwise. But I would remind the Members those legal opinions differ. And I was fortunate enough to sit in this chamber with a public representative who spent many years in prison from the legal opinion of judges, barristers in this day, and spent many, many years on the very same opinions of what we're talking about and lucky enough he got a presidential pardon. There are people rotting away in prisons all over the world on legal opinions. There are three opinions there and I'm not questioning it in regard to what's been said here. But I did say last the Section 140, if it was withdrawn here today, the Chief Executive has the authority to withdraw that application and it's there in black and white from An Bord Pleanála that it can be withdrawn and if the Members here decide that we won't direct the Chief Executive to withdraw it, we will ask him. We will ask him as public representatives to give the public what they want. It won't delay the project. It will not lose the money. And I sincerely disagree with what was put in the presentation about the 15 million being lost. That's scaremongering. That's nonsense. Three small aspects of this are the three bridges and then the car park and the public don't want them. They are asking us as public representatives to stand up and be their voice. I am saying here today if we don't support the Section 140 and it's withdrawn, that the Chief Executive withdraws this from An Bord Pleanála. And An Bord Pleanála are saying it can be withdrawn. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Can I bring in Cllr Timmins, please?

CLLR TIMMINS: Thank you, Chairman. I made my points very clear here. Some of the points have been made. Some haven't been. The consultation is key here. There was no consultation [inaudible] are public. I have to repeat that. In relation to the presentation we just received, I have to take issue with a couple of points on it. One is comparing the bridges over the lakes in Blessington to small, tiny bridge in Rathvilly which I'm familiar with. There is no comparison whatsoever. That bridge was always in Rathvilly. It wasn't made any narrower. It was always a bit of a bottleneck, so cars had to wait there in any case. To put lights on it, to make it a little bit safer, whatever. But it

was already a bottleneck. It didn't take half the carriageway out of the bridge to create the lights. So, there's no comparison at all.

Secondly, the bridge in Rathvilly over the Slane is a really small distance. It's about 50, 60 yards, a fraction of the Knockeiran Bridge. To compare it to the bridge in Rathvilly, there's no comparison at all. It's an unfair and irrelevant comparison.

The parking on the Main Street, which was just a stroke of a pen. When I saw it, I was just shocked? I thought where did that come from? We had parking issues on the RDF funding, and we met with the businesses and went back and forth, the council met with the businesses and the [inaudible] and it was all resolved. This was done without any consultation with business whatsoever. It was outrageous.

Thirdly, and this wasn't mentioned, the public road has been pulled into this Greenway up to - off the lake road as you head up towards Tullow Ferris. The public road has been brought in there, a narrow public road where farmers have lands both sides of the road. They move animals across the road. They only heard about it the night of the public meeting in Vallemount about four or five weeks ago.

Mysteriously, part of the Greenway at a top of a T-junction turning left down Tullow Ferris was also brought into the Greenway, even though there is a walkway from Tullow Ferris that links back up to the Greenway. I don't know why that was brought in to create a loop walk.

Overall, no consultation, just done completely wrong and it's created a lot of bitter feeling out there. So, the onus is now on Wicklow County Council to resolve this issue. I'm not sure how exactly they're going to resolve it. From the point of view dealing with this Section 140 today it's clear from the legal advice, and we have to go on clear legal advice, the legal advice today is a lot clearer than what we got two weeks ago and my understanding of it and anyone I've spoken to understanding of it is this Section 140 is void and not legal so we can't vote on it. There's no point in voting on it. In fact, it's illegal to vote on it. We can't vote on it, that's clear to me.

I would just go back to the council and say, can you come up with some comfort for people as to how this is going to be dealt with in relation to the lights, in relation to the parking, in relation to the issue around Tullow Ferris, and perhaps other issues as well which we're not going to go into



at this meeting today. The onus is on Wicklow County Council were instrumental in not consulting with the public, not consulting with the elected members in the Baltinglass Municipal District, so the onus is on Wicklow County Council to come up with a satisfactory proposal that can give us comfort that these matters will be dealt with properly and openly and people will be listened to, and their views taken on board. So, I think it's back to the council to give us some satisfaction. Otherwise, this is just going to go on and on and become just, you know, a bitter saga. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Timmins. Can I bring in Cllr Patsy Glennon, please?

CLLR GLENNON: I hope you can hear me.

CATHAOIRLEACH: loud and clear.

CLLR GLENNON: First I'd like to concur with council Snell and wish Gerry's wife a speedy recovery. I know she has been unwell for some time. To move on to the issue we're all here about. Everyone is in agreement there have been mistakes in how the matter has been handled to date. There should have been more councillor, as Cllr Timmins said. We should have been informed before any decision was made to An Bord Pleanála.

As council Joe Behan said at our last meeting, I attended all five meetings in West Wicklow about aspects of this proposal, and there were very serious concerns raised at every one of those five meetings, and those concerns need to be addressed.

Having said that, we are where we are, and we must move forward from where we are. Even if the position is somewhere we'd prefer not to be, here, and it is currently before An Bord Pleanála, so this is where our focus needs to remain in my view.

There has been much talk about the lack of democracy in the process. I think some of these people need to ask themselves, who are the ones who are being undemocratic? The need to ask. Are they suggesting that the council chambers should trump the Oireachtas -- legislation enacted by the Oireachtas and signed into law by the President of Ireland, it is crystal clear that planning matters are outside the scope of Section 140 of the Local Government Act 2001? This has been the position since section 52 of the Local Government Reform Act commenced on 1 June 2014. Yes, we are here spending a second day arguing about this matter. Section 140 10 E is clear that planning matters are outside the scope of the Local Government Act 2001 and any efforts to change what's before the chamber here

today, as suggested by Cllr Snell, should be resisted, in my view.

We have sought the advice of senior counsel and two very eminent senior counsel have given us very clear advice about what the position is. That senior counsel in his advice relies on Section 140 subsection 12 of the Local Government Act 2001. That subsection concerns the lawfulness of such an action if it were to be taken by the Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive has made it very clear that he has no intention of withdrawing this application from An Bord Pleanála regardless of what happens here today with the vote and whether we as members like it or not he is within his statutory right to adopt that position. Unfortunately, we have some members here playing politics with this very serious issue, pretending we can direct the Chief Executive to withdraw the from An Bord Pleanála when it is now abundantly clear we can't withdraw the proposal. This position was made clear to us all two weeks ago and we have further opinion from two senior counsels confirm what most of us accepted to be the position then. Yet there are those who still don't accept that advice.

I ask those people, why are they misleading people? Are these members trying to enhance their own political profile? Or maybe they're trying just simply to be popular. In fairness, I would like to think that my two colleagues are just acting out of mistaken belief regarding the Section 140 resolution. I do hope that in the light of the new legal opinion that they now consider - reconsider their position.

As for misinformation that's doing the rounds around this part of West Wicklow about the whole affair, and to be fair I'm not blaming my two colleagues, I got a phone call last Monday night and the caller telling me that he was told by someone that I had voted for lights on the bridges. That couldn't be further from the truth. I was the first councillor to raise the issue when we were initially told in Blessington by the then Chief Executive about this part of the plan. I immediately knew the importance of the bridges to locals, better than anyone else in the room, if I may say so, despite what some would want you to believe now. I've lived all my life in the locality of these bridges, 64 years in total so I know the importance to the community. Thankfully, I never depended on the rhetoric of this Section 140 resolution or never thought it was going anywhere. I have made a strong submission to An Bord Pleanála, as have other public reps who were correctly focused on the need to submissions to An Bord

Pleanála, of which I got my acknowledgment this morning and I just quote from that acknowledgment. Sorry, my earpiece is falling out here. It says the second paragraph: please note the proposed development shall not be carried out unless the board has approved it with or without modifications.

I am hoping that the board will instruct modifications to the plan as it currently exists. A hearing with An Bord Pleanála is our best option to resolve all these matters. I genuinely hope and pray that a resolution can be found to this awful impasse. This is essential that this issue is resolved. I believe that this along with inadequate parking on the Greenway should be resolved before any work commences on the project. These two issues must be addressed by An Bord Pleanála, hopefully in conjunction with Wicklow County Council, before this project gets the go-ahead.

I would plead with all Members to be truthful about these issues and to stop playing politics with people's genuine fears. It is not right to mislead decent people about this Section 140 resolution. It was never going to have any effect. We do not have the authority to direct the Chief Executive to withdraw this matter from the board. I plead with everyone to stop playing politics about this matter.

As regards the Blessington Greenway, this is the first serious investment in our part of Wicklow for many years. I don't want to see West Wicklow -

CATHAOIRLEACH: I'm going to have to cut in here now. Thank you very much.

CLLR GLENNON: Literally one minute.

CATHAOIRLEACH: One minute, OK? Thank you.

CLLR GLENNON: I don't want to see this part West Wicklow missing out again. This is a risk that should not be taken. These two issues can be resolved by Wicklow County Council dealing with the inadequate parking provision for the Greenway and if I may say so I prefer Option 4 Margaret mentioned rather than the one they chose, and I suggested that some months ago. This must be done before any work commences on the Greenway as all other issues that have been raised, these I believe can be resolved during the final stages of planning. Even at this late stage, I would urge Wicklow County Council to engage with proper counsel with those affected. Wicklow County Council need to engage with shop owners in Blessington, the farmers along the route and all those affected by the Greenway. As for the proposed vote, if it is taken, it is clearly out of the scope of the relevant legislation. It is

in effect ultra vires. I will not be voting on the resolution before the chamber. This is of course should the matter proceed to a vote. I still hope that common sense might prevail, and my two colleagues decide to withdraw the Section 140 resolution. I urge you, both of whom I greatly respect, to consider all that I've just said and do the right thing, even at this late stage in the proceedings. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Patsy Glennon. My father told me once, whenever you get advice free of charge, take it. That gentleman has given us a good bit of advice there, so I let him finish for everyone's benefit.

First and foremost, can I concur with my fellow councillors wishing Gerry O'Neill's wife a speedy recovery. Gerry, I do apologise. I didn't know before the meeting started. Can I bring in Cllr Joe Behan?

CLLR BEHAN: Congratulations to you on your handling of the meeting so far. I wish you every success for the rest of the meeting. I also want to join with you in wish the Cathaoirleach all the best. I'm not sure if he's joining us remotely or not, but I wish you all the best.

As other members have said, Cllr O'Neill has to be really sincerely admired for how he has managed a lot of difficult pressures and still tried to do his duty to the utmost at this meeting today. Gerry, I admire and salute you for your wish to represent your people as fully as you possibly can. We all obviously wish your wife all the best and a speedy recovery.

Cathaoirleach, I won't repeat everything I said last week. I will just get down to the two new issues.

The Chief Executive has sent us a number of different legal advice and they all really, when you read them, and I've read them many times, they come down to two issues. The first is you're not allowed to withdraw an application from An Bord Pleanála and the Section 140 is not valued because we can't issue a Section 140 on a planning matter.

Now, we have the answer from on board. It's not from just somebody sitting in an office with no authority. The email states that the board - the board - and the officials know there's a difference between a board and a member of the board or somebody working in the board, the board has asked me to advice you, it is open to Wicklow County Council at any stage of the application process to withdraw the application. All they need to do is send in a letter.

So, this rubbish about legal advisors telling us that we can't do it when the very body dealing with it and the person who is actually administering the file has sent a letter - an email to a councillor, an elected councillor, saying of course you can withdraw it. Now, if that's not good enough for Members, I don't know how else they could be convinced. And for those members of the public who attended all those public meetings, I'm sure they will find it very, very hard to be convinced having been told that the board have said, you can withdraw it, why we as councillors would accept some third party's advice we can't.

I think that deals with that element of the advice completely.

The second part is in relation to whether we as a body can pass Section 140 when it's a planning matter and, yes, it has been said by my colleague Cllr Glennon and the Chief Executive referred to it. Councillors can't issue a Section 140 for a planning matter. But it's worthwhile reading the original advice given by Esmonde Keane, senior counsel to the law agent. In fairness to the law agent, I don't know if the law agent is listening to this, I want to salute her professionalism and integrity. She has a job to do, and she does it excellently. One of the excellent things she did is that the latest set of documents we got on Saturday night indicates the full advice that Esmonde Keane gave to her before the last meeting and I want to quote the party that wasn't in the bit we got but it was in this one: "In my opinion" - this is Esmonde Keane, the man who the now Chief Executive is relying on - "In my opinion how you regard to the fact that the development herein being proposed by the council in its function as a roads authority - a roads authority - albeit that the council is also the planning authority for the vast majority of the area in question" - now, these are the important words - "it could be argued that the functions of the council in the present case in submitting the application for development consent to the board for approval is not a function being carried out by the council in respect of its functions as a planning authority".

So, in other words the senior counsel that the Chief Executive is telling us to listen to is saying that it could well be argued because this is a roads matter, that it's not actually a planning function at all, and he then goes on to say: an argument could thus be made that the prohibition under Section 140.10e would not apply to same. I'm sure Cllr Glennon referred to it. In my book it at least is arguable that we are entitled to pass a Section 140 because the council is acting as a roads body, not a planning body. We're not giving

planning permission. We're submitting a file to the board looking for the board to give planning permission. We are quite entitled to pass the Section 140 and the Chief Executive would be obliged if we pass it to withdraw it because he is entitled to withdraw it. We're not asking him to do anything illegal. So, we have countered the two main arguments that were put forward.

Cathaoirleach, could I just ask Members, I understand particularly newer members, when you're presented with a whole lot of senior counsel's advice like this, it's very difficult to counteract it and comment against it and argument against it. It is easier to kind of accept the word and not take a risk. But for the sake of the hundreds, if not thousands of people whose lives are going to be completely thrown upside down if these bridges are installed and these parking spaces are taken away. We fix the application and resubmit it. We're not saying it will never happen again, we're saying make it right which should have been done by the start. If the top table had a little more trust in the elected members and the people they represent and given them the opportunity to try and raise these issues in advance, we would not I'm quite convinced be sitting here argue being this. So Cathaoirleach, please support the section 140 today, you would be doing the right thing in my opinion. Thank you

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr Joe Behan, Cllr John Mullen next.

CLLR MULLEN: Thank you, I hope your wife is recovering well. I'd like to agree with first of all what Cllr Patsy Glennon said there in relation to his knowledge from over 40 years of distinguished service in the Gardai. And his legal advice as a barrister. It is clear that the section 140 like I've said last week, or the last meeting, is a strategic and tactical mistake because, we're involved in a planning process now where yes communication mistakes have been made by the issues with the parking and the issues with the bridge have to be resolved through the process of planning and the process of final design and the process of construction. I know a little bit, not everything, I'm not expert on everything, unlike some people but I do know what it takes to manage serious walking trail affect in Wicklow. And it is unfortunate that the project liaison group established now wasn't set up from the start because the

key to this Greenway which is a magnificent opportunity for west Wicklow is ongoing, continue continuous and never ending consultation with all the key stakeholders which is the communities, the farming community, the business community, and the stakeholders that are building and managing the project. That's what is going to win, solutions will be found, some may not be easy to accept but they will have to be found and it will be a trial and error process in many ways and that's my experience of it over the years. When people talk about public roads or rural public roads and something I've learnt only recently from being on the disability and inclusion SPC, is that public roads are also there for pedestrians, they're also there for cyclists, they're also there for people with mobility issues and for parents with buggies. Public roads are owned by the public. And it is up to the roads section and the engineers who are designing the roads and maintaining the roads to ensure they're safe as possible for every user, whether you're in a tractor and trailer, a car, a bicycle, pushing a buggy or in a wheelchair. And what the engineers have to do here is provide a Greenway that is as accessibility for all users and safe as possible. I don't want us to diminish in fairness to Margaret all the difficulties she's going to encounter here, and the difficulties being forwarded on the bridges in particular, the parking one is probably might be more easily resolved than the bridges issue. But the brushes issue is going to have to be involved because it is a loop, it was designed to be a loop and always going to be a loop and funded to be a loop, so we have to get the Greenway users safely across the bridge that doesn't adversely or unacceptably delay traffic. I'm not an expert what the specific issue is. But it would be in the real world where we live in, where every other part of the country is competing for Greenway infrastructure because all the data and all the evidence, time and time again says that Greenway infrastructure really radically improves the economic and social fabric of rural Ireland, that's a fact. And we've a 15 million project in a process where we're still going to have to go through the process and to pull it now in the real world would not only risk the funding for this Greenway, but every other Greenway and it would question the competency of this

local authority to deliver major infrastructural funding on other matters. Such as housing, and all the other issues we deal with as a council. It is it is a strategic and tactical mistake this section 140, I agree that Cllr Patsy Glennon the legal advice to me is quite strong and I also think it doesn't fix the issue because withdrawing, if we withdrew the planning application today, we still don't have a solution. What we have to do is work out a solution and that's going to be part of the process of planning and process of final design and the process of construction and there will be other issues that will be foreseen like parking as Gerry pointed out in Blessington and issues that haven't been foreseen. And on the parking one, it is better to have a managed parking process than unmanaged parking process, I was talking to Cllr Patsy Glennon recently and he was explaining to me the over the years the unmanaged traffic parking process in Blessington, people parking all over the shop and I've seen this happen down here. The evidence is when we put in a managed system 90% of the people who use walkways will use the managing park structures available. If additional spaces are needed, they will have to be put in the town plan which is coming in down the road with the County Development Plan. I'd like to urge my colleagues today, to be responsible, we've a duty to be responsible here. Let's work with the process, let the project liaison group get up the ground and resolve the work that is need today resolve these matters. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr John Mullen. Cllr Avril Cronin please.

CLLR CRONIN: Thank you very much Cathaoirleach and thank you very much for giving me the time here to speak. I'd like to wish Cathy the very best, Gerry I know she's had difficult few weeks so pass on my best wishes. This as I said before this exciting project that will transform the whole of west Wicklow has caused frustration and this disappointment and a lot of anger and we're now in this difficult position that we're in today. We cannot deny communication could have been better, consultation could have been improved, but we are where we are, and we must move forward to address these issues rather than dwell on the past. I am a firm believer that communication is



key, and all aspects of life and I've always tried my best to bring that on board with my work as a councillor too. Because of this policy I've decided to arrange a meeting with the council officials to engage positivity with the council and the councillors to try and resolve these issues. We cannot resolve anything without direct communication. My job is to represent the people of west Wicklow and bring their views to the council and that is what I did by arranging this meeting, I'd hoped our meeting with the councillors had resolved the issue but unfortunately, we couldn't come up with a solution there. I have been told on numerous occasions the council are trying to resolve this issue and I am putting my trust in them. I have spoken to many residents and community groups, and I know the issues and concerns regard are regarding this Greenway and they're valid concerns, as it affects their daily lives. But I firmly believe that we can resolve these issues. As I said I've been told on numerous occasions the engineers of the council are working on these issues and they're looking for a solution. I'm not an engineer and never claim to be so I'm putting my trust in the experts they will resolve these issues. I'm constantly working to improve west Wicklow, obtain new funding to improve services and infrastructure, for the people of the west of the county. I believe that the Greenway will bring about the developments we're longing for, increasing tourism, improve infrastructure such as roads and transport and increase job creation. I want the younger generation to be able to stay in west Wicklow, work in local area and raise their children in the area they love. I don't want future generations to be forced to leave due to lack of opportunities. I do, however, have my reservations about the legal implications of this vote today. We're all in a difficult position, and I want to do what I believe is the right thing to do. we're trying to do our best to represent a people that elected us. I'm also conscious the submissions have been made and the implication that is withdrawing this application will have on those submissions. But I cannot ignore the legal advice given on this occasion and I cannot go against my moral obligations and take part in a vote that is unlawful, invalid, and illegal. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr Avril Cronin. Can I bring in Cllr Vincent Blake please?

CLLR BLAKE: Thanks chairman and thanks for the chairing of meeting today in absence of our chairman. And wish him well and Gerry's wife a speedy recovery in her recent difficulties. OK. We're going back and someone said ten years, probably is ten years since we've further muted with the idea of a possibility of a Greenway around the lakes in Blessington and we're aware with the ESB primarily in the terms of the ownership of the properties there, and undoubtedly there's a number of landowners as well. But it is difficult to understand how we actually got to a situation where we are, in view of the fact things were going so well, Margaret's presentation and thank you for that today, presentations that have been made to us all along, were substantial. And, at no stage did we ever think we would run into a bottle neck like today and over the last few weeks, and it is the lack of consultation, I said the last day, maybe we were going too well with the whole thing. Maybe the lack of consultation at the end of the day in terms of parking in Blessington and the lights and the bridge as well, they're two serious issues that actually need to be dealt with. But at the end of the day, it will be dealt with An Bord Pleanála, at some stage or other, whether it is today or tomorrow, some stage An Bord Pleanála are the people who will deal with it in that regard. I thank Cllr Patsy Glennon for his presentation and the legal advice he gave us in that regard. It is very much appreciated. But at the end of the day if the manager said to us, he's not going to withdraw it, he won't withdraw it, that's the end of the situation with us, we request vote on it all we like, some people have reservations voting on something that's said to be illegal. But nevertheless we have to vote and we'll vote on it, as the manager said he won't withdraw it, he will let it go ahead and let An Bord Pleanála make a decision on it, and it is Cllr John Mullen said there, An Bord Pleanála are, we mightn't agree with everything they say from time to time but at the end of the day they are a planning authority out there in terms of the difficult ones in that regard. So, look, I wish everybody well in

regard to it. And thanks again for the presentations made to us.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr Vincent Blake. Cllr Gail Dunne your hand was showing, are you OK, or do you want to come in. OK, you where testing could I see it, as if I don't have enough to do here. Thank you.

I'm going to, thank you very much Gail. I will ask the Chief Executive to come back in here then. Thank you.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thank you Cathaoirleach and I just like to wish Cllr Gerry O'Neill's wife a speedy recovery as well on behalf of the council. Just to address the point made by Cllr Joe Behan on he is Monday concern's legal advice. In line with all good legal advice, it investigated all angles of the issue and then decided on balance that the motion was void. Same legal advice that council Cllr Joe Behan refers to, if you look at the conclusion, part 3.1, it states "I'm of the opinion, that the suggested resolution, here in is one which would appear to be legally infirm and invalid and in breach of section 142, and/or section 140-10, that's" there was further clarification sought on the matter from the same Esmond Cian point one of the clarification, can candidates vote of the Local Government act 2001 - in my opinion if they vote section 140, it is not valid and is not the act that authorises, not relate to, not only does the Chief Executive obligation but the vote itself is void and no effect and would be liable to judicial review challenge that could expose the councillors and or if to council to significant cost implications. I think that's Chris cool clear in relation to where we stand on the matter legally. Thank you Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Chief Executive.

I was going to go back to Cllr Gerry O'Neill, but Cllr Tom Fortune wants to come in here. Cllr Tom Fortune.

CLLR FORTUNE: Thanks chair. Can I also wish Cllr Gerry O'Neill's wife the very, very best, and hopefully she has a speedy recovery, Gerry? It has been a very interesting debate and my experience of listening to legal argument is Tweedle Dumb and Tweedle Dee, it depends on who is giving to you and what the rational national is, simple thing running around my head for the last half hour, when

Margaret made her presentation, she gave us four options, outlined four options and for maybe it was five. But I think it was option four, where it showed that the drawing showed there was two cars passing, people passing, and I think she made a comment that there was some difficulty with that. I'm not an engineer but it struck me, perhaps there's a solution there, if that particular option was to be properly explored for example even if you made cars, to make that option work, I'm wondering would if you had cars going at crawl space for that distance, that option, would that solve the problem?

I don't know. But Margaret presented her report that was very thorough, but it seems to me it is a report and just done, strikes me I hope it is not just done to counteract the debate about the section 140. But I think that particular option should be examined in great detail in front of the members. Just a thought.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much Cllr Tom Fortune. Cllr Gerry O'Neill I will go back to you, but can I reiterate, balancing council life and home life you're an example of it here today and I take my hat off to you as well, so Gerry, can I ask you to come back in please. Thank you.

CLLR O'NEILL: Thanks Tom. Just again, I know this has taken up a lot of time. North, south, east, and west of the county over the last two evenings and I'm sorry it did go that far but the feeling here is very, very strong that this has to be addressed. I'm a little disappointed about some speakers there, where they suggest it is a populist thing, I was never into populism in my life and anyone that knows me, know that I did 47 years in a political party and at the end of the day I was shown the door because I wasn't a nodding dog, and I'll never be a nodding dog to anyone. It is from the heart, that I brought this motion to Wicklow County Council, and it wasn't only one or two people, there's 15, 1600 people have signed a petition. There are hundreds, up to 500 submissions gone in on it, so it is a real issue. And I think the most important thing as I pointed out on the outset was that I was always behind this. Absolutely behind it. I disagree completely with the method that was used, dropping the Part 8, ignoring every one of the

32 councillors in Wicklow County Council, and Zooming in on the direct application to the board. But could I point out again, that, I really want to see this Greenway working but I think the mess that has been made of it, we're on the wrong road completely. We are on the wrong road. Could I point out there too, the news there only last week, that a local rogue club they had been given permission to build 1500 square metre building instead of where they are now, in containers or wherever and Wicklow County Council granted that, and it was appealed to the board and that was upheld at the board grant and then it went into the High Court and they lost it.

This is where this is, there's people I honest to God believe that with this presentation, there are people in the long grass and they're waiting to come out and this thing will go on and on. So, I would plead again to people to consider this, that if we get this right and all I'm talking about maybe is six, eight months, to draw it out, let all elected reps have input into this, and if there's an alternative. And I believe there is, because there was cantilevers proposed in the first Part 8 and I think we can get over this, for the sake of six or eight months, if this was pulled, section 140, if that is an issue, if that is an issue there, I would delete the first few lines of my motion and ask, on moral grounds, on moral grounds, this is not fair to the people of the area. I know that. And a lot of people know t and plenty of senior members of Wicklow County Council know this as well. It is absolutely wrong to impose, inflict this hardship on people. I couldn't sleep in bed at night to think there's 14 businesses that would be wiped out. That's wrong, that will never be right no matter what we talk about, how we - it is just wrong, absolutely wrong. So, what I would suggest there, that we go to a vote, and if it was OK, or if I don't know the procedures in there, have a long way from Wicklow Town at the moment. If there was a way of getting this pulled for six to eight months, that's all I'm asking for, is that we can work in harmony with one another, instead of the application that the way it was presented there, in direct to the board and we are getting the plan the same day, that is wrong, it will never be right. As I said at the last meeting this can be repeated, so throughout the

county. It is still wrong. It is a wrong way do it. Morally.

So, I plead again, and I say thanks to all the councillors for putting up with this, listening to Cllr Gerry O'Neill voice the last two weeks, but I honest to God believe that we will eliminate a lot of people in the long grass waiting to come out here, if we can tidy this up and make sure we do have a proper Greenway, and even last time, even it was one-third of the Greenway done at the moment. But to get, move on, use that money, get it done right. Even to this day, Cathaoirleach, I still don't know who the Greenway committee are. I don't know what the set up was here, no elected rep was ever a member of the Greenway committee. I don't know who they are, I know the project leader but after that we know nothing, we're in the dark, I talked to Cllr John Mullen a while ago and he was behind the Greenway in his own neck of the woods and he's part of the committee today. But up here, no-one was ever involved, we didn't know that it landed on our plate. So, I could finally make a plea that, even if it was for six or eight months, we can have a fair look at it. The project liaison group that should have been done years ago; it doesn't make any sense whatsoever at this stage. So, again, I plead even if the by motion eliminate the first couple of lines on T where we talk about the section 140, go in morally on this, because it is a huge, huge issue, and it is leaving a sour taste in the community. So, I plead again to look at that, and thanks for your time, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you for coming in on this today of all days today. Gerry, I have one more speaker to come in, but I will ask you do you want to proceed with the vote after this speaker comes in?

CLLR O'NEILL: I would yeah.

CATHAOIRLEACH: That's OK, thank you. The next speaker is Cllr Mary Kavanagh.

CLLR KAVANAGH: Thanks, Cathaoirleach and I also want to wish Gerry's wife all the best. It is quite obvious listening to the legal advice that's been given by three

members of the legal profession that you know there's a great resistance to separate two things. One is effort by us to compel the CEO or the chief economic to make a decision and withdraw. And then, what you would call the spirit of it, which is to forget that we can't direct him to do this or there's doubt over it but that we're asking so there's a big difference there between asking and directing. But the directing looks like it is not a runner, there's enough letters going around saying that it isn't, it is void and illegal and this that and the other. But there is definitely a greater good kind of ask coming from the two councillors which who submitted the motion which is that in the interest of everybody the public, the public reps, the businesses, the health, and safety issues that this should never have reached this stage without public consultation. Given all the scaremongering that's going on, I very much doubt that the vote will succeed anyway but if it were to, it wouldn't be accepted, so, realistically, we're really just wasting time having a vote I believe but we might as well see where we are anyway. But I hope that lessons will be learned from this because, it isn't good enough. It isn't good enough to bring this to this stage. A project of this magnitude at this stage with such blatant stakes in it, such problems that are going to be caused for the people who live there, have lived there all their lives, whose families will live there long after them and who will be forever affected by this, it should never have got to this stage without public consultation and with consultation with public reps. So, the only thing I hope as an outcome of this meeting today, is that lessons will be learned for the future, thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much Cllr Mary Kavanagh. I think this has got great airing and I definitely at the last meeting and especially meeting today, I hope everyone has had enough time and got their point across. So, I'm going to ask now can we go for a vote on it:

CLLR FORTUNE: Cllr Gerry O'Neill when he was summing up his input there, he made a suggestion about what we put forward and I think we're ignoring it, what he said. In regard to his motion. We should maybe listen to what essaying, and ...React to what he's saying.

CATHAOIRLEACH: OK, I'll ask the Chief Executive.

CLLR FORTUNE: Cllr Gerry O'Neill when he was summing up, he was making a suggestion, and that suggestion hasn't been reacted to. So, before you go to the Chief Executive you should make Cllr Gerry O'Neill make his point.

CATHAOIRLEACH: He said drop the first two lines. Now, do you want to come back in on that Cllr Gerry O'Neill.

CLLR O'NEILL: Sorry, Cathaoirleach, what I'm saying is that I wanted to dos a fairly as civil as possible. I want that breathing space of six to eight months that we all can have our input into it. And to relodge it he was in it a short time, this is well and truly up and running before he was considered, he knew as little about it as I did at the time, so I don't want to be unfair to anyone, I want to be very fair to the CEO and all the staff and I think that if it was a question, of the section 140 that he cannot withdraw on, I would delete the first, first paragraph. And I'd, I would just amend to ask the Chief Executive to withdraw this and give us that space. That's all I'm looking for ...

CATHAOIRLEACH: This request of withdrawing, can you explain, withdraw two lines of it, and postpone it that's what he's looking for, six months breathing space.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: As I understand it, Cllr Gerry O'Neill is withdrawing a section, proposing to withdraw section 140 which directs the Chief Executive and replacing it with a request. Withdraw it for six months, the problem there, and the three legal opinions, did state that, there is no legal provision within the act to withdraw an existing allocation that it has to go through the process Therefore it wouldn't be possible.

CLLR O'NEILL: The legal opinions were connected with the section 140; it was clear from them.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I know you're not happy, Cllr Gerry O'Neill are you happy to go to a vote?



CLLR O'NEILL: Well, I'm explained that already there. We brought it there, to a vote, on section 140, but if it is a question of, meaning nothing in the end of the day, and taking on board legal advice, well, I'm asking, simply, for the I'm asking the Chief Executive to withdraw the application to An Bord Pleanála for a period of six to eight months.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: He is Monday keen's clarification note and third point, the question was asked about whether we could informally withdraw it, and it says we can't. That it could give rise to a situation where there is potentially judicial review would take place, so, that covers that element. So, we're not in a position. I just want to point out as well, it is not as if there's alternative option in place, which could be submitted, you know, within six month period. There is no alternative option that people are out there proposing or putting forward to, so, to suggest we'd have this done in six months' time, doesn't make sense and that puts at risk, 15 million of funding and knock-on effect it has for the funding of other projects in Wicklow. And I as Chief Executive are not willing to take that chance, but in any event, legally I'm not in a position to withdraw it, and the three legal opinions.

CLLR O'NEILL: Could we not go back to consultants who didn't consult with anyone?

I know there's huge concerns to people, but the two issues we have before you, surely to God, we can, there's a lot of money spent on this report and all I'm asking for is six to eight months there, to withdraw it, and go back in, whether you want to leave the section 140 on it, I don't mind.

HELEN: Cllr Gerry O'Neill the only option as proposer of the section 140 is withdraw it or proceed as it is and it has been circulated and read out earlier, do you wish me to proceed?

CLLR O'NEILL: Isle' making a proposal to delete the 140.

HELEN: There's one motion in front of the council.

MS GALLAGHER: It can't be withdrawn legally unless you trust the officials to leave with the board and have discussions while we're in the planning process as Cllr John Mullen had mentioned before. But otherwise, there's a motion to the floor, you're the proposer of it, Cllr Gerry O'Neill, only you have the authority to withdraw that motion.

CLLR O'NEILL: OK. If that's the case, well, I want to put it to the floor.

HELEN PURCELL: Section 140 as circulated and as read out previously, and what I will say just in relation to the numbers required, Section 147 of the Act says: Without prejudice to any other requirements, it is necessary for the passing of a resolution under this section that at least one third of the total number of Members of the local authority concerned vote in favour of the resolution and that figure is rounded down so 10 votes are required in favour to pass this particular 140 resolution.

[COUNCIL MEMBERS VOTING]

There are five -- four against, seven not present, and 15 abstaining. As there aren't 10 in favour, the motion is not passed.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Members. I'm going to go to the second thing on the agenda. Teresa, would you read it out, if you wouldn't mind? Thanks a million.

TERESA: This is to consider report in accordance with Section 179 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended, Part 8 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001-2006 as amended, development of 106 residential units to include 70 number houses, 36 number duplex apartments and creche of 200 square metres and associated site works at Burgage More in Blessington County Wicklow as adjourned from the meeting of 7th March 2022.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. We have a presentation -

>>: No, not at the moment. We met at another meeting since with Baltinglass members Friday week. After that, we had a look at one area. So, I'm adding one further modification, so there are four modifications on the design regarding the bridge - sorry, the bridge. The design regarding the boundary treatment. We couldn't do much with that. Mostly left it the way it is. However, there were two issues. One was the boundary treatment. The second one was parking. So, I'm adding a further - we were able to deal with some of the parking issues, and that is that the design would be modified with increased parallel parking to provide it on the - I'm going to call it the graveyard site or the western side of the site, number will be six or seven, subject to safety audit. That is one of the issues and that is the modification we're making. Thank you. I therefore recommend it as is with that modification and the order that's on the report.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Director. I'd like to bring in Cllr Avril Cronin, please.

CLLR CRONIN: Thanks very much, Chair. I have to leaving the meeting in the next few minutes, so I just wanted to come in briefly on this. I know we've raised our concerns with Joe and Declan over the past number of days and weeks and thanks very much for accommodating our meeting last Friday. I know a number of residents have contacted us and we've met residents and discussed it with residents that are currently living in the area and nobody has been against any of the housing that has been built in fairness to all the local residents that are there, they have no problems with the houses being built but there is concern over the parking issue and traffic congestion as well as the lane is actually a rural lane at the moment and you know it's important to keep it as is as much as possible, and over the weekend we saw huge crowds in the area along - parking along the road and I know a number of videos have been sent in to the council as well as sent in to all the councillors regarding the congestion and that was before houses were even built up there.

So, I'm just asking the engineers to take that on board. The videos that you saw over the weekend really have

outlined the severity of the congestion up there and the issues that are currently there at the moment without the additional houses being built. There is a need for additional parking up there, as is. So, we need to take that on board especially if we are planning on building these new houses. I do welcome the development. I think it's fantastic to see new houses being built in the area and they are badly needed. I would just ask to take into consideration the traffic congestion and the parking issues that are up there and that we outlined in our meeting.

Apologies. I do have to leave in the next few minutes. I just wanted to get my points in just before I have to log off. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Cronin.

Can I bring Cllr O'Neill again, please?

CLLR O'NEILL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

Avril, I hope you don't leave before my proposed amendment. I talked to Declan. I sent him an email and I sent him a rough plan of what I think will be the best way out. I could just read this email if you like. What I'm talking here is I intend putting the following amendment tomorrow. As you see in my rough sketch, I am proposing that the new housing development behind the ditch, I really think this is the best way forward. I have talked to residents on several occasions over the past while and although some are anxious about other aspects of the plan, I believe this would satisfy everyone.

I understand your proposal to eliminate parking outside the graveyard and to put in a green area for proper sight lines. In other words, the area outside the graveyard which was always used for parking will be gone as such and they would be bringing in their sight lines from the eastern side of the approach. To compensate for losing this parking, I am suggesting a car park outside the graveyard. This parking is badly needed. That is the section opposite the graveyard I'm talking about.

Number one [inaudible] stays in place. Then, number two, it will keep cars from using the lane to access the

Greenway where we have dreadful problems every weekend during summer. Number three, it's badly needed for parking for funerals. This area I'm talking about is badly needed for parking space for funerals. The new car park would not interfere with the master plan for the second section of the 32 acres as it would only take in a little more than existing ditch and is already proposed on the northern side of the estate.

So really what I'm asking there would be that the area opposite the graveyard would be made into a - [transmission difficulties] very, very important because we're losing some of the parking outside the graveyard because of the new development and simply to put - sit the ditch into the - or sit the housing estate in behind the ditch as a standard owner estate and it would be no different than any other estate in Blessington, whether it's Deer Park or whatever, they are standalone estates. So, I don't think it's going to be a big deal one way or another. I think out of those 106 houses, we may lose four but we'll have 102 houses in there. I'd like to thank Declan for helping me out with this order the past while.

This is a rural part, this little lane that we're talking about building on the side, is a rural part of Blessington. In fact, we can mention the lake again here. There are people living on that lane whose families were [indiscernible] and were moved from the valley with the flooding and they're settled there many, many years. So, it's an old part of the town as such. So, there are 22 houses on that lane. So, I think this will be the best approach that we don't interfere with them, and we can still build within - and there will be no delay whatsoever on this. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr O'Neill. Cllr Glennon, please?

CLLR GLENNON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Thank you, Joe. I'm glad to see that you've agreed to put in some parking off the graveyard as you mentioned in your summary. I would be in agreement with Cllr O'Neill that the ditch is required to be retained. It's an issue with locals, and as he rightly says, there are a number of other issues but that is kind of a compromise that we've come up with

in an effort to appease those people living down the lane. There was a number of other issues that were raised as which Declan has somewhat addressed in his responses prior to our municipal meeting about the issue. But I'm supporting Cllr O'Neill's proposal that the ditch be retained and needless to say welcome council housing in the area. It's badly needed and has been in Blessington a number of years.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I'm going to bring in the director of housing.

>>: For the other Members, there are eight slides and just to explain it. Secondly, councillor, I think you misunderstood what I said. I said, no, the amendment I was suggesting was, that's between the junction and back onto the L at the graveyard site. That's the western side. From the junction back up to the graveyard, not across the road.

The difficulty - there's two difficulties and Declan explained the second one. But parking across the road opposite the graveyard, this is different. This is outside our take line. Therefore, it's outside the park. I can't do that, development outside the line that I've drawn.

The one we're recommending is bag into Burgage, the link road onto the local road, taking a left towards the graveyard, there's space there subject to audit and we recommend parallel parking on that road we reckon between five, six, seven subjects to audit. That's what we're recommending we're doing. So, it's at the graveyard side.

CLLR GLENNON: I accept that, Joe. I'm glad to see some additional parking is being retained, even if it's on that side. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Declan?

DECLAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Go on to the next slide, please, Teresa. To clarify a few issues and we showed this to Members last Friday week. That's the existing laneway and what's to the right there is the ditch that Cllr O'Neill is referring to. That's to clarify that. It's really an earth mound with some

growth on it, I think there's five trees in total, three of which are recommended for removal anyway because they're not in good condition. To the left of that there's a development going ahead which got planning permission in the last couple of years and they've taken down the ditches. If you go to the next slide, please, Teresa, just to clarify, that's the situation at the moment. In the last few weeks, those ditches were taken down. So, half of the length of the lane that our proposal is on, the ditch is already gone on the other side of the road. So, it's no longer a country lane or will no longer be once that development goes ahead. That has five houses directly coming out onto the road and a new footpath as well.

So, the character of the lane we would say is already changed. So, I think the proposal that we're making is more in keeping with that than trying to keep it as a country lane. If you go to the next one, please, Teresa. This is the proposal that was sent in as part of a lot of submissions from the public and this was considered by the design team. It's probably hard to see on that, but the existing ditch is to the left there where the arrows are pointing to. So, the proposal is to have two parallel roads with the ditch in between them and that the road serving the new houses would be accessed from the south. From the very bottom of that drawing there. So, you'd have a section of road going across. That's where the units would be lost. And that would serve those houses. That would be the access point. So, it's introducing an extra road at the bottom which isn't overlooked, isn't supervised, and would have resulting problems.

It's also extra roads. I mean, it's two roads parallel to each other which isn't good design and good practice, it goes against all the design standards, and it's not good environmentally either.

If you go to the next one, please, Teresa? Thanks.

This is the proposal. On the other hand, it's the parking for the new houses would be accessed directly from the existing road. I mean, I know it's been referred to as a rural lane, but with this development and with the development going across the road, it's now

going to become an urban road and it's more in keeping having the access from the houses directly off that. It helps with traffic calming. It reduces speeds on the road. And it also provides footpaths to access. I know there are a lot of pedestrian movements on that road, both from the residents and from people accessing the Greenway, so it helps with that as well.

The next slide, please, Teresa.

This is just to give an idea. This is actually taken - I took this from Google Streetview. It is the Main Street in Blessington. Just to show the separation. I know there were some concerns about the access from the parking directly out onto the Burgage Road just to show that there is enough space allowed so that when people are reversing out, they have sight of the road. There will be similar space as there is there. The back of the parking spaces where that yellow line is, that's onto the N81. It's just to illustrate that point really, that the parking isn't as close to the road that people might think, that there is a separation distance.

Next, Teresa.

This then is just to illustrate the parking that's proposed. This is subject to safety audit. We don't know how many spaces there will be. But it's that area that has been created to give proper sight lines at the junction at the bottom corner of the cemetery. The road had to be moved east away from the cemetery wall. So that space is now being utilised to provide some additional parking, as was requested by the Member. That's the change that Joe was referring to either. Thanks, Teresa.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Declan.

>>: With that modification, like I said, and Declan has there, we did look, after the last meeting last time, we did try to accommodate it. The difficulty is, first of all, that mound has limited definition. Therefore, we don't know what we're trying to save. So, what you're going to end up doing is bringing the development up as close as possible to it. It doesn't make any sense because we don't know what we're trying to save. What you're going to end up doing is you're going to



[inaudible] Declan said you have more road, which is bad design. You have a creche entering rather than it's being accessed from the road. If a house is [inaudible] what we end up doing is trying to landscape something that we're not quite sure what we're trying to do. Plus, there is pedestrian safety. At the moment the design has, as Declan showed, the mound with no footpath on that side, there will be a footpath at the other side. In this case we have accommodation for a footpath. Like I said I'm recommending the Chief Executive report with the modification as I have outlined, which is that there is parking for what Declan said there on the last slide, parking at the graveyard side, six or seven depending on how many we can get in after the safety audit.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Joe.

CLLR O'NEILL: Cathaoirleach, just for a sec there.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Can I just bring in Cllr Edward Timmins.

CLLR TIMMINS: Thanks, Chairman. Just very briefly, I would like to support the proposal with respect to the ditch. Also, I accept from what the director of housing has said about the extra car parking space that's been proposed, that's outside the remit of Part 8. If that's the case - I would say if that's the case, I suggest something be done about creating parking spaces in that piece of land opposite the graveyard. Parking there is a huge problem at all times. We do have to address the issue of creating car parking spaces opposite the graveyard and retaining as many as we can on the graveyard side. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Timmins. Cllr O'Neill?

CLLR O'NEILL: Just briefly there, the amount of space that will be left outside the graveyard I think is about six. When the green area goes in for the sight lines. And at the moment there's some parking on the right-hand side opposite that parallel parking. But what I've asked there, maybe Declan could show my sketch there, it's clearly to make a proper car park for people who travel through the Greenway and for funerals and that. And I don't really think that it's interfering with the master plan for the other half of the 32 acres because already the road for the new estate actually goes over - goes

into part of that before it hits the entrance into the new estate. But really, it's only a simple thing. My proposal there is to get - to do like we have throughout the town, a standard estate, in behind the ditch or hedge or whatever we want to call it, we can leave the trees there, there are five or six old trees there, and I think everyone would be happy with that. It's not a major - this is not anything really major we're talking about, and it will satisfy everyone.

>>: This is from the housing department. It's outside their remit to do a master plan for the area.

CLLR O'NEILL: That's on the section, that's on half of the 32 acres.

>>: I'm telling you what's in front of us here at the moment.

HELEN PURCELL: Cllr O'Neill, can I also ask I don't have the exact wording of what you're proposing. Can you tell me the exact wording of what you're proposing?

CLLR O'NEILL: I sent my email to Declan yesterday. What I'm proposing is that the new estate would sit behind the ditch. I know that's opposite.

>>: All the elected members, we're looking at a scheme of over 100 houses. If you're proposing an amendment that's been seconded by Cllr Patsy Glennon, we need to be clear what that amendment is for the record and for the other elected members who are being asked to vote on that amendment. I don't know how we're going to do this, but it needs to be done. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Can I bring in Cllr Joe Behan, please?

CLLR BEHAN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just while Gerry is maybe preparing that proposal, it struck me, we got a number of emails from residents. I actually went over and saw the place myself, some of the pictures that Declan showed there. What strikes me as very odd is that the Director of Housing has said that it's safer to have cars reversing out onto the public road than for cars to be parked inside on a cul-de-sac development and it's safer to have a creche onto a public road. What Cllr O'Neill is proposing is that there would be a standalone small estate of whatever number of houses, 10 or 12

houses, correct me if I'm wrong, Cllr O'Neill, contained within a cul-de-sac. Whether the ditch is 2 feet, 5 feet wide to me is completely bogus and irrelevant argument to what he has proposed because it could be planted and ensured that it's a nice - visually enhancing the area.

It's totally to me ridiculous to suggest that it's safer for people to be reversing out onto a public parking road. The planning department of Wicklow County Council I would say with any other planning application was recommending people reverse out onto a public road rather than be parked in a cul-de-sac, I think they'd just throw it out. They'd laugh at it...

It is unbelievable Tommy; Wicklow County Council owns a huge site on the periphery of Blessington and many years of buying it atoning about it an Action Plan still hasn't been developed. While I wasn't familiar with the graveyard, when I saw it for myself there's no parking facility apart from a bit of muck on the side of the road that is like a DIY parking lay-by, there's nowhere for people to park, and that's only going to get worse, unless there's parking provided for people attending the funerals or who will be working on the famous Greenway. So, I think at the very least where Cllr Gerry O'Neill is proposing is reasonable and I think the residents support it, and I think the local councillors have said they support it. And I certainly will be supporting it Cathaoirleach, thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr Joe Behan. Ms Lorraine Gallagher where Cllr Gerry O'Neill read his amendment, so we get it in the record.

CLLR O'NEILL: It is just that Lorraine, that the new housing estate would be placed behind the ditch, off the lane way at Burgage.

MS GALLAGHER: New housing estate will be placed..

CLLR O'NEILL: Behind the ditch off the lane way at Burgage.

>>: That requires a design per the traffic management report given to them. Which means we have to keep all the traffic with this report Declan gave which brings them within, so we can't come out on the road then, we

have to loop around, take out the creche and move the creche to the top and get the traffic going, it would be as per traffic thing, it is not a recommendation. We don't think she's gone; it is the inclusion for that, is included in the body of the report.

CATHAOIRLEACH: OK. Lorraine, you have the motion.

MS GALLAGHER: And that said what effect will that have on the scheme?

The proposal is that ...

JOE: Can it be technically be done, yes, but we have to be clear what is happening, it makes no sense to us, you are bringing back the development, you are following the logic of their scheme, removing four homes, from the scheme, you're removing the creche, you have more road, it is not good planning, and nor first choice planning and you have houses facing a ditch which you normally wouldn't have. For what?

I don't know plus you're removing pedestrian safety that we had them within the safety thing. So, it is not a recommendation. I'm not coming to with my amendments.

CATHAOIRLEACH: OK. I'm going to bring in the Chief Executive here for a second, thank you.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, I think, there's confusion here maybe and possibly I don't know what the timeline on this is better, do we leave this to next Monday and clarify it or are we happy enough.

>>: We have looked at it, after the meeting we have looked at it. Gerry knows we had a look at it, it doesn't make, ...

MS GALLAGHER: Cathaoirleach, we don't have to make a decision on it today, if there can be further discussion on it.

>>: We will be back in the same position Lorraine.

MS GALLAGHER: There's is a window there. It has to be passed not later than six weeks after the receipt of the Chief Executive's Report. So, if the members want to put that for consideration for a week or two to allow more discussion, or put it to a vote?

CATHAOIRLEACH: What's the opinion in the room?  
Councillors.

>>: We're anxious to move this on. This is a section, is Part 8, it is PPE, we have the next meeting of the PPP like I said we did look at it. You are removing units and you are keeping the creche within. The design we have, we have dealt with the parking issue. The area opposite the graveyard has to be dealt with in another forum which is another Part 8 later on in the master plan. Nothing we can do about that, but we have created the extra parking there. The parking for the development is in the report. We have dealt with all the parking required for the development; it is the extra parking of the graveyard which this is the issue. Part 8 is deal with the parking that's designed. The running a parallel road opposite it, doesn't actually make sense to us, and that's why we're not being difficult about this. we have looked at it, we've looked at the design and again, I'd recommend it as is.

CATHAOIRLEACH: OK, Cllr John Snell please.

CLLR SNELL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Yeah, at previous meeting I did ask the Director of Services to engage once again with the six Municipal District councillors in Wicklow and that's important going forward for anyone. I wanted to thank the chair and the other five elected members of west Wicklow for attending the meeting with Declan and Joe. I suppose, what you see from that is, things that can be changed, and have the practicalities of it, if it can be done it will be done. I understand fully and I think Cllr Joe Behan and Cllr Gerry O'Neill have outlined in regard to the safety aspect to people

attending the local cemetery over there, and again, I would have faith that, can be addressed at a later stage. If it comes down to the issue of 106 units and 102 units and you were going to have the 22 families who are already in existence, living in harmony beside a hundred-plus families I'd have no issue in supporting delaying this or going back to the drawing board. But the reality is that from what I'm listening to, that, the Director of Services is saying that from a planning point of view they're not comfortable with changing this. If it was-to-the sake of losing four units, I know it is four families but the reality is I know all the members want housing units in west Wicklow, but I am conscious that there is 22 families there, who believe it can be done differently and that was the whole idea Cathaoirleach of asking the officials to sit down and meet the elected members and trash it out. And they seem to have had some success. But unfortunately, we're in a situation now where, we're obviously not unified, everybody collectively and I would ask the director if this wasn't passed today, what sort of a time delay does it jeopardise in regard to the 106 units?

I fully support it. But obviously the members on the ground, over in west Wicklow fully understand it more than we do here in our location in east Wicklow, but from a county council point of view to provide a hundred plus units is brilliant but you also have to be conscious that they will have to live side by side with the 22 families who are in existence as Cllr Gerry O'Neill says for generations. But unfortunately, if the engineers and the director have met the officials, the elected members and have given their opinion, and we're still not in a situation where there's an agreement, I believe we'll have to have a vote on this.

JOE: On the intervention, we're not sure if you put a ditch there and bearing in mind the design of the that was sent into it us the intervention we could do, there's nothing that will happen within a week, we're anxious to move this on, the person who said they're not sure what intervention we can do if the ditch is there, we've listened to sob missions which is the Part 8 process, we received them and looked at them, we again met the area

councillors and looked at it. But it is not where like I said, I was asked could I not bring a proposal today, it is not a proposal, it would into the be the choice. The choice is as submitted with the amendments, once we provide stuff for the extra parking, we looked at that and subject to safety we will put extra parking at the graveyard side which is what we said at the meeting, but the second bid is not what we're comfortable with.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you director. Teresa, are we going to take a vote or amendment?

TERESA: Section 179, of the Local Government Act and sorry planning development act and what it says under 4B is following the consideration of the Chief Executive's Report, the proposed development maybe carried out as recommended in the Chief Executive's Report unless the local authority by resolution, decides to vary or modify the development otherwise then as recommended in the Chief Executive's Report, or decides not to proceed with the development. The proposals that I have before me from Cllr Gerry O'Neill, seconded by Cllr Patsy Glennon, is that the new housing estate at Burgage More Blessington be placed behind the ditch off the lane way at Burgage Blessington, is that the correct wording Cllr Gerry O'Neill?

CLLR O'NEILL: Sorry, that would be correct, yeah.

HELEN: Yeah, and that's seconded by Cllr Patsy Glennon?

CLLR GLENNON: Yes, Helen would you mind reading the wording again please.

HELEN: New housing estate at Burgage More Blessington be placed behind the ditch off the lane way at burgage Blessington.

>>:

CLLR GLENNON: Subject to Cllr Gerry O'Neill that the ditch in front of the new housing estate be retained on Burgage lane as it currently exists, or in the ditch, that it be retained as the new houses being behind. I

don't want it sound we want the new houses hidden away, we want the ditch retained, I think Gerry is in agreement with me there.

CLLR O'NEILL: It is Declan pointed out there, he showed a photo of the new housing, estate on the right-hand-side going up the lane. Now that takes in about a hundred yards and there's five of those already would be reversing out on that lane. And what I'm trying do is make that lane safer because when you leave the end of the barriers you see the fencing there, there's another 130-40 yards up on the lane to the end of our site that we're proposing to build 100-odd houses on. So, it is just to have the retain as much of the lane as possible. I mean, I understood here from months ago, that this was the first proposal by Wicklow County Council was to place this new estate behind the ditch. And then, it was changed or whatever I'm not sure of that, but all we want to do is make a safer lane there for the people who are there, a long, long time. The 22 residents, we want to make it safer for them, we don't want extra traffic going up there, and by the way, in the proposal there on these twelve new houses that we will be going on the road, it is only on street parking.

HELEN: What you're saying is the existing ditch at Burgage More Blessington be retained, is that what you're saying.

CLLR GLENNON: That's what I'm seconding.

MS GALLAGHER: New houses at Burgage be retained as is currently existing, that's your proposal as read out.

CLLR O'NEILL: My difference there is, I'm asking, for the housing estate to be placed behind the ditch.

MS GALLAGHER: What's the point of order so we know what we're voting on. I don't want to be difficult; we're trying to get the amendment clear so the amendment can be passed on.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Yeah.

CLLR GLENNON: I fully understand.



CLLR WINTERS: Can I just say, I agree with director Gallagher, this is nuts, we are meant to put in motions, in writing we are meant to put in proposals in writing are to this very reason. It is difficult enough if we're all in a room, but that ditch, which ditch we want to behind it, put it in the writing and we can look at vote on it. If it is not writing put it in, and we'll do it at the next meeting.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, director here now.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: I think there is a bit of confusion, and we want to get this right and everyone needs to understand what they're voting on. So, I am suggesting that, look we've a meeting next Monday for the County Development Plan that we push this back to then and in the meantime, we get written clarification, and the adjustments are actually circulated in writing to everyone, so they fully understand what they're voting on.

Is everyone happy with that?

CLLR O'NEILL: On point of order, I did put in my motion to Declan there yesterday, OK, maybe Helen should have got it, but, and I gave you my motion again there. But if it is for the sake of a week, Cllr Patsy Glennon and myself, sit down and find out a little bit more about ditches or wherever and get this application in, and get this amendment in. I'd be happy enough with that.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: To be fair to all members here, I think it is fair we just have a better understanding on what they're asked to vote on. OK. If we go next week.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Irene Winters, is on there.

CLLR WINTERS: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just, yesterday was Sunday of a bank holiday weekend, if you want a motion brought to the council, it goes in on a working day. Not on a weekend or a bank holiday. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

Thank you, Cllr Mary Kavanagh. Please.

CLLR KAVANAGH: I was going to say that we're looking at a very intense meeting next Monday, possibly running into Tuesday, is there any time limit on this motion that couldn't go to the actual full council meeting on the 4th?

It is just like the County Development Plan meet something a specific meeting, we could be sitting there for an hour discussing wordings and motions and stuff. You know, this, County Development Plan meeting is specifically for that, could they not be deferred to the meeting a week later.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr Mary Kavanagh that's a fair point. JOE: Six weeks from the closing date, so we're tight whether it can be Monday week, we'll check that. There's a specific time frame of when we circulate.

HELEN: Six weeks from the date it is circulated.

JOE: We just need to check that.

MS GALLAGHER: We're here to help, Helen here is here help elected members with their motions, but we can't do it, the way the business has been done here today in relation to not submitting motions in advance of the meeting administrator, it makes it too difficult, and nothing is achieved.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much.

CLLR O'NEILL: The motion I proposed has been accepted.

I mean, Helen took down the wording there, can it not go to a vote once we're all, instead of dragging it out for another week or two or three or four. That the new housing estate will be placed behind the ditch off the lane way at Burgage. Thank you, she took my wording

there, down and I've assumed there it is valid, so why not get on with the vote if we're going to vote on it. It has been accepted here at the council meeting here today. My wording, and it was going to a vote. And now, we're back to square one.

HELEN: That was because it wasn't seconded by Cllr Patsy Glennon in the wording, that I had taken down. So, the wording wasn't agreed for the motion.

CLLR GLENNON: In the interest of peace sake, I will second Cllr Gerry O'Neill's wording as it is.

HELEN: As proposed by Cllr Gerry O'Neill and seconded by Cllr Patsy Glennon is that the ditch, at the new housing estate at but, Burgage More Blessington is retained, is that the correct wording.

CLLR O'NEILL: Read it out ten.

That the new housing estate.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I'm sorry. No, we're not going to let that go ahead because it's gone on too long, I appreciate your concern. I'm going to ask:

CLLR O'NEILL: Helen asked me there the new housing estate would be placed behind the ditch at Burgage, I said half an hour and it was accepted and Cllr Patsy Glennon has now seconded that. I don't know what is going on to tell you the truth.

It is a billet ...

HELEN: The wording, the new housing estate at Burgage More Blessington be placed behind the ditch off the lane way at Burgage Blessington, which was the original wording.

CLLR O'NEILL: The new housing estate will be placed behind the ditch off Burgage. Blessington.

JOE: You can't move the whole thing back. You have to redesign the road; the road is currently opening out on what do you call it - the local road. You have to, that will have to come with the amendment which is probably like what the traffic consultant came which is a total

redesign, you now have internal road inside rather than the thing. So, it is not putting behind the ditch, it is redesign of that.

CLLR O'NEILL: It is simply to sit it in behind the ditch, the same estate.

>>: Does anyone know where the ditch is. Has anyone got a map?

CLLR O'NEILL: I walked it again yesterday, I know it very well, and I set a drawing on to - it is simply to look at the estate again, instead of putting it out on the lane on top of people, it is to sit it in behind the ditch. The exact same estate.

There are no alterations at all, this is new I heard this alteration toss it, it is to sit the estate in behind like every other estate in Blessington, put it behind the ditch there, as you have is. And the beautiful elm trees.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr John Snell please.

CLLR SNELL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

I think the wording is clear, unfortunately what is not clear is the implications of what's being proposed. So, from the presentation that Declan gave, as I understand is the housing were facing out on the lane way, therefore no planning regulation that each back garden has to be 11 metres, by moving it back then, it can congest the space between houses the implications of that. These houses would be facing out on the road as it stands if the ditch was taken out. The ditch is put in, are we turning the houses around, to face the other way. I think to be fair to all members, we need a drawing, and we need the implications and planning of what this would, implications of what would happen, and members can make informed decision. There's ample room at next week's meeting, our County Development Plan meeting and we could have it as item, if the members had a drawing in advance of next Monday, we could make a decision on this, and not hold up the process and at least everyone would get a fair hearing. It is unfair of members, and north Wicklow, south Wicklow, and who don't fully understand, and I know the members on the ground over there, feel

passionate about T but they know the area. I think the wording, we could talk about the wording all day. It is a physical drawing we need in front of us and the implications of the housing units, will they be turned a full 180 degrees to face the other way.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, I'm going to bring in

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY:

Kennedy: I won't take informed vote not knowing the implications of these being made.

CLLR MITCHELL: I think that we need to know whether the people want this ditch or not. In my view to keep a ditch when building a hundred houses you're turning it in a urban area, there's no question that's the case, to keep a ditch in the middle of an urban area, you have water and dirt and litter, you have a hedge that nobody will cut, you have people burning the hedge, so, I don't think it is a feasible to keep looking like a rural lane when you're building a hundred or more houses there. As far as I'm concerned it doesn't seem sensible to keep the ditch. Although I don't know it, we should establish whether the councillors want to keep the ditch or not and if necessary, vote for the next Part 8 next week if people want to keep the ditch but I don't think a ditch in an estate of a hundred houses is sensible at all.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Miriam Murphy.

CLLR MURPHY: Yeah, thank you Cathaoirleach.

Just two things. Can we not have the opinion of Declan who was involved in this discussion with the members in the area?

Also, if I was one of the families who missed out on one of the four houses, I would be very bitter.

I mean, these are the people who we are fighting for tooth and nail always to get housing. And some of the councillors in the area have said it has been a long, long time since Blessington got a housing scheme. So, you know, we're working for the people to get housed. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Vincent Blake please.

CLLR BLAKE: Accommodate the people up there, that is diabolically in need of additional housing, we had difficulty with the sewage plant, needs to be upgraded as well, we get to a stage now where we're providing houses for people up there, a ditch has Cllr Derek Mitchell said there, I don't know if we have to retain all these, what's the design of the houses (poor audio). We know the consequences of piment, members need to see what the consequences would be, by not accepting supporting this.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr John Mullen.

CLLR MULLEN: Thanks Cathaoirleach I won't be long, I would like to agree with colleagues, in fairness to the residents there, they have legitimate issues, it is a pity the master plan for the other lands wasn't provided for prior to this happening, it is kind of cart before horse stuff but we are where we are, but I think, the motion by Cllr Gerry O'Neill and Cllr Patsy Glennon if that's given time and if one or two is what we need to get it right we need to get it right. Residents are accepting of the houses, and they want the houses they just want it done in a way that complies with their own knowledge where they live themselves and that's a legitimate ask and we should make every effort to accommodate the residents and in fairness to Cllr Gerry O'Neill and Cllr Patsy Glennon if that takes a couple of weeks for us all to be happy, so be it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Chief Executive now please.

JOE: Chief Executive's report, the first submission was dealt with, and all the answers that Declan or I've answered twice already are in that Chief Executive's Report dealing with what it is. If we're going to meeting next week, as I said, at the Baltinglass meeting I'm not designing this, so if somebody wants to design it, we'll look at it, as far as we're concerned and the Chief Executive and the planning report, this represents proper planning and development, the development as recommended to you. So, we can't do much more with it for the next two weeks bar delay it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: As I said earlier and in fairness to Cllr John Snell he made a fair point to be fair to all members and better understanding what they're voting on, in relation to what is proposed by Cllr Gerry O'Neill the amendment and implications of it, I think it makes more sense that we delay it for a week, next Monday, and we can look at the implications and then, that will be outlined to the members so they'll know exactly what they're voting on and take a more informed decision. If the members are happy, as you've said earlier, happy to perceive on that basis, are we still happy?

>>: Yeah. OK.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Happy to move on everybody. OK.

thank you. Try to get some of the workload done for Shay before he comes back. The third thing on the agenda is to consider a three of year Annual Capital Programme. Copy attached. From postponed from the meeting of the 7th of March 22.

BREEGE: Members, I'll just outline the three-year capital plan again as it was postponed over a fortnight ago. The report on the capital investment programme for 2023-2024 presented for consideration amounts to 553 million. It's a strong programme of planned capital investment in the county, with expenditure envisaged in 2022 of 160 million, 192 million in 2023, and 201 million in 2024. The overall programme is dependent on funding from grants of 450 million, development levies of 31 million, drawing down required loans of 36 million, and using other funding of 37 million. Separately there's a late amendment which will include the sustainable transfer to show active travel rural specific fund of 1 million to be funded from development levies.

As part of the capital investment programme, the council prioritises county-wide projects on the basis of available funding, level of need or urgency, and for creating future development opportunities. It should be

noted as part of a three-year rolling programme, and it will be reviewed in light of evolving circumstances, and it is presented to members on an annual basis for noting.

I will give the answers now to questions raised at the previous meeting that weren't already addressed by the Chief Executive. Cllr Mitchell was looking for levies being raised and spent in each area. It's a county scheme, the development contribution scheme updated in February 2021 is for county-wide public infrastructure and facilities as outlined in the appendix to the document.

Cllr Mitchell also raised a query on Claremont and the mortgage on Claremont. I would just note Claremont was approved at the council meeting and the required loan was approved at a full council meeting. It's a county-wide asset, actually. For example, the new content creation hub, the screen industry hub will be based there and it's one of only three hubs being established nationally, the other two being in Galway and Limerick. So that's good for the county.

Cllr Leonard queried about Kilbride Arklow in the roads junction. This actually is part of the plan, it's an aspirational plan, and this is only if the developer proceeds on planning permission application. It's a guesstimate at this stage subject to negotiation as to what would be needed. If the development did proceed, it would generate development levies in its own right.

There was also query on Arklow Abbylands development. This is at the preplanning stage of a large residential development. Again, it's just a guesstimate as to what would be required for access roads if it was to go ahead.

As regards economic development and the criteria for choosing projects, it's as resources allow and as need arises. The other thing to note is certain things appear under different parts of the capital programme. Arklow historic core, which would be very comparable to some of the projects going on and comes under the roads programme rather than economic development. I think Cllr Bourke had queries, but they followed on from Cllr Leonard Mitchell. And Cllr McManus's queries then. What is the special pilot/new schemes in the housing programme? Basically,



these could be anything the department might decide to send our way. Currently perhaps maybe the department might roll out a national modular housing for refugees from Ukraine and the funding would be provided by local government and it would be up to us to implement it. It might be something we mightn't have envisaged in the next three years but that could happen. The last query was where the re-lets gone and these are the revenue account now. That's the queries as given to me at the last meeting.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Breege. Derek Mitchell?

CLLR MITCHELL: Thank you for that. At the last meeting somebody suggested that the programme should be broken down by area, which is not a simple thing to do. However, I have broken it down by area because I just was concerned about what I felt was a lack of money being spent in Greystones Municipal District which has a startling growth of houses at the moment and it's going to continue for a while.

What's happening is that the highest amount of money is being spent which could be allocated would be spent in the Baltinglass area, 41 million. The rest of the areas, Arklow, Wicklow, Bray is between 33 and 30 million, and Greystones is 8 million. So that's a quarter of the lowest of the other areas. And it's simply not acceptable to me in view of the startling growth in the Greystones area that the investment is not being made to cope with all these people who are coming, and these houses are being built right now. You can see at least 800 houses being built right now around Greystones. There's another 800 in the pipeline after that.

As far as I'm concerned, there are - you know, some people seem to think that Greystones has everything, but we do not. We've had for - 20 years ago, An Bord Pleanála refused permission for a Kilcoole industrial estate to expand on to Ballyronan and eleven link was built. Since then, the council has done nothing about that, preventing the expansion of that industrial estate. There is considerable demand for industrial estates in Kilcoole. And the people who live in those areas are plagued with trucks all over the place in the middle of

Kilcoole and various little roads. There are also footpaths and things that are needed to cope with all these people. I'm not prepared in view of the unbalanced investment which is going on to support this. I realise it's not a vote, it has to be noted, but I want to record that I do not agree with it as it's been noted. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Mitchell.

Sylvester Bourke. Cllr Bourke, do you want to come in?

CLLR BOURKE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Yes, I'd like to welcome the report and the contents of it, especially for the Arklow area. I know it's aspirational and I'm delighted to see that the aspiration is being put in there to put in additional road infrastructure if Kilbride development goes ahead -- or Abbeyland development goes ahead. I assume the Abbeyland development is the port relief road and I think that Abbey Avenue you can explore to draw down funding to put in the port relief road in conjunction with Arklow being designated as a wind energy hub and Airtricity's decision to base themselves there would be really welcome and very, very progressive. I welcome this report and I would propose that we adopt it. Thank you very much, Cathaoirleach.

Cathaoirleach, before I hand it over, in case I don't get back in, you might run out of time. You didn't mention at the start of the meeting about the success that the Wicklow ladies team had yesterday, they would be All Ireland, minors, girls in each of our areas played on the team, including your own daughter, and they're really thrilled about it. I would like to propose that they be included for a civic reception at one stage because they won the under 16 All Ireland final last year. Now they've gone ahead to win the minors. Congratulations to them. I hope that the council will be able to send on congratulations to them in due course. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I second that, Cllr Bourke. MD is whispering in my ear. Definitely it needs to be recognised that is it is County Wicklow championships. But I didn't want to take your limelight away from you, Cllr Bourke. Congratulate your daughter for me as well.

Next is Cllr Joe Behan.

CLLR BEHAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Just two questions. Could Breege indicate the sum of money currently being held by Wicklow County Council in total in capital levies, the global figure, and where is that invested? That's the first question.

And second, under environmental services, I notice a huge figure to be spent in - a cumulative figure, but in this year half a million, next year 2 million, and in 2024 15 million, giving a total of 17,500,000 on remediation of the illegal dump at Whitestone. Almost €20 million is provided for in this capital report.

Can I ask the Chief Executive two questions about that, or the Finance Officer, whoever wants to answer? I know that's an expenditure amount. Is that going to be fully funded by the government, number one. And number two, have any discussions taken place with the owners of Ballinclare Quarry in relation to the use of that if it gets planning permission for being filled in for the repatriation of that refuse from Whitestone from the east of the county? Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

Vincent Blake, next please. Cllr Vincent Blake.

CLLR BLAKE: Thanks, Chairman. I think Breege did make reference to one million Euro or the 500,000 a year that the county manager brought in there as well for the rural areas. I would just like to remind the department as well that the [indiscernible] engineering area was the only area in the whole county to my understanding that didn't get any funding whatsoever in that particular project. Hopefully, the half million a year, that we will see some of that money coming towards our area. Thanks, Chair.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Grace McManus next, please?

CLLR MCMANUS: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I very much appreciate the answers to my previous question. Just three quick supplementary ones. Can I ask why and when the re-lets budget was moved into the revenue account. The second question I have is, can we get a bit more

detail on what is meant by the allocation to social housing land. And my third question is: the funding for the affordable housing -

CATHAOIRLEACH: We're having trouble in the council chamber hearing you. Can you speak into the mic?

CLLR MCMANUS: Sorry. Is that any better?

CATHAOIRLEACH: That's great. Thank you.

CLLR MCMANUS: Number one is, why and when was the funding moved for the re-lets from the capital to the revenue budget? The second is: What is meant by social housing land? The funding for that. Thirdly: The affordable housing allocation seems quite low. I'm wondering is that the only revenue stream we'll have for affordable housing over the next three years. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Next is Cllr Tom Fortune.

CLLR FORTUNE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I would concur with what Cllr Mitchell said about the amount of capital funding coming into the district. Can I make the added point that on the south side of Kilcoole, we probably have - after Bray we probably have the largest business parks in the county, and there is an absolute urgent need for the traffic from that - that plays a very important role in the whole commercial life of the area has access up onto the N11? Those need to get priority. I know it's been talked about in kind of a vague way at the moment, but it does need urgent priority because it is very, very important.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Breege, do you want to come back to any of the questions?

BREEGE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Just in relation to Cllr Mitchell's query. This is a three-year plan and like in some of the three years, a lot of funding goes to one particular area and depending on the need in the area and the particular county and where there is a need to address the resources that it can provide in that area.

Actually, also answering Cllr Fortune's question, in the figures that were picked up by Cllr Mitchell for Greystones, there is aspirational but possibly hopefully

more than that enterprise centre for the Greystones Municipal District, and that's a significant level of funding for Greystones that is considered in the plan. It isn't identified as such, but it is opened it will be there for the Greystones area. As regards the Ballyronan-Kilcoole link, there is 100,000 in the capital investment program for a feasibility study, and it is proposed that this will be undertaken as part of the Greystones transport study which is ongoing and recently briefing was given to the MD Electric Members on that this morning. So, to address that. Cllr Bourke, Helena is just going to come back to you after I finish on the Abbeylands development.

Cllr Behan, the development levies amount received to about 50 million which sounds like an exceedingly large sum of money, but any development can take up quite a large amount of development levies. That's a figure freely available to the Members in the annual financial statement, and it is held in the banker of choice with local government, which is the HFA, which is risk-free, and currently at the moment there is no interest and thankfully not negative interest being earned on it.

I'm going to let Brian address the Whitestone and, yes, the rural money is there for hopefully the area.

As regards Cllr McManus' query, the re-let's move to the revenue account in 2021, it's more of an accounting issue in that the money was being spent through the capital account and funded through the revenue account, so it was more straightforward just to keep the actual expenditure through the revenue account. It's more clear-cut.

The social housing, again, is somewhat aspirational. The government would urge us to acquire affordable social housing to build social housing on, and if in the hope that we come across such land, we would put it in the land to purchase it and borrow from the department to fund it.

The last thing, the affordable housing. All we're seeing there is the actual funding element and own funding element of affordable housing. Wicklow County Council is just the middleman in the affordable housing, that the houses will be sold directly by the developer to the

affordable housing purchaser. So, we're not seeing the actual cost of the housing being put through our three-year capital plan. If I hand over to Helen now?

>>: Just in relation to the funding for Abbylands. You mentioned the Port Road. It's not associated with the port road. That development is a proposed development to the year of blackberry heights. It came in as strategic housing development is the new wording for that under the new scheme. Large scale residential application at the same time we were preparing our capital programme. So, it is a figure that we believe development will be needed in that area to access that area possibly next year. Very early stages. Only negotiations at this stage in relation to preplanning.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Chief Executive?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Just in relation to the Whitesound question by Cllr Behan. The figure we have in there is 7-1/2 thousand. You will be aware in the audit report that was issued to Members, it made reference to Whitesound. That figure stated that costs haven't been finalised. So, the figure of 17-1/2 is basically a provision that we've put in the plan just as recognition that there will be works to be completed. We obviously don't know exactly how much it's going to cost. There's a draft remediation plan that was developed last November. That has to be approved by the court and the costs will then be finalised. Subsequently a funding plan will be submitted to the department of climate with whom there has been ongoing communication and an ongoing commitment in relation to funding. You can actually see from the presentation in the capital plan, it has the full amount of 17-1/2 thousand under grant 8 column. So, the assumption being made is that it will be fully funded.

In relation to the Ballinclare Quarry, I don't actually have an answer to that. I might contact the environment and if we can send you an email tomorrow on that? Grand. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Chief Executive. Cllr Edward Timmins.

CLLR TIMMINS: Thanks, Chairman. Sorry I didn't get in earlier. Just briefly on the development levies. This was brought up at our planning SPC about a year ago, maybe more, and requested that - it's a really difficult task. But what were the development levies collected say over the last 10, 15 years and were they were spent on, that's a really difficult task. But I think we need some mechanism of recording and showing us development levies collected and what that pot of money - where that pot of money went and how that's been dependent track of. Unless I've missed it, but I have never seen such a report. I think it would be just a useful exercise for the council, for us all, the management and the members, to understand better how the development levy collection process works. I think that that's a useful exercise. By the way, the proposed capital investment programme, we've got these over the years, generally a lot of them were aspirational. If you look back, you see a lot of things on the lists never materialised and other things take their place. That's to be expected. But just to take it, you know, with not quite a pinch of salt but it doesn't actually always happen as it's laid out. And that's impossible. You can't predict what your capital expenditures are going to be. I think we should do more to understand what levies were collected, obviously what we're outstanding is a thing that has come up a lot in the past, and what exactly they're spent on.

I know tracking money like that is difficult because you're getting grants to cover a lot of stuff, development levies have been lumped in, it's a really difficult exercise. I think we should look at doing it - how accurately you can do it historically, I'm not quite sure - perhaps it's something we could commence tracking going forward and see what information we can on historic stuff. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Cllr Timmins. Breege, did you want to reply to that, please?

BREEGE: It did come up at the SPC and work was commenced by planning and finance. With a lot of things, with the year that was, it never got to finalisation stage. We will revisit it and look at bringing information back to the council at some stage in the future.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Members, for your contribution. This is just to be noted, there's no vote proposed or second on this. Thank you for that.

Moving on. With the members' indulgence, could I skip number 4 and go on to number 5 on the agenda and that's to discuss housing re-lets in County Wicklow, please? Could I have a seconder for that? Thank you very much. Thank you, Cllr Snell. Helen, who is coming in on this? Oh, sorry. Cllr Aoife Flynn-Kennedy.

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY: Thank you very much, Cathaoirleach, and I appreciate the Members facilitating this as well.

This item was raised at the housing SPC and relation to information that the Housing Department provided us on how they're going to deal with re-lets going forward. A number of members from Bray Municipal District raised this issue because we've had such thankfully a number of new units in Bray, but it's created a lot of transfer opportunities. So, if the Cathaoirleach is agreeable, I would like to ask Cllr McManus to speak on this matter as herself and Cllr O'Brien requested this.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I have no problem with that.

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY: That's grand. Just for the other members, the reasons we brought it here is because the officials would be present, and it would facilitate the quickest and most timely response to this request.

Thank you. Cllr Grace, I'll hand it over to you yourself.

CLLR MCMANUS: Cathaoirleach, I don't know if somebody from the housing department wants to give a brief outline first.

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY: No problem. Joe, would you be able to do that, explain exactly what the proposal is before Grace comes in? Not proposal, the information as such, I suppose. "Proposal" is the wrong word.

>>: Bearing in mind the re-let budget that was given, there is a significant - there will be a significant amount of re-lets. So, at some stage we will run out of money. So, what we were proposing, we will continue



doing this, is up to now heretofore we have refurbished nearly every house that has come in on the theory they don't come in very often. What now what we plan to do is houses with the minimum amount of effort that needs to be done will be put in immediately. Houses that heretofore would have been given a very significant refurbishment, if there's no need, if under health and safety grounds these can be put back in, the bigger refurbishment jobs won't be done but we will use a choice best letting system rather than allocate to the next person on the theory of fairness. Again, the next person up can apply if they wish. But it's more a choice best letting, and it would be to prevent houses sitting there from people saying, "Well, I'll be taking that." so Now they will be given opportunity.

And then because of the sheer volume this year - next year will the success of the programme, we will be allocating with normal - what do you call it? - losses or normal tendencies coming back, plus in excess of 450 units new houses next year. We reckon we could have 675 allocation next year. With that, that will generate about 135 re-lets. We won't be able to refurbish all of those in the time period. Sorry, with the monies available. Therefore, anything that's left we will have to board over and particularly in the Bray area because we have over 250 units that are in the area of 30 plus as in the Chief Executive's report a big development coming in of circa 200 units, plus last year's units and 275 leases. We're the victim of our own success so there will be a lot of units. We don't have the budget for refurbishment. Some will have to sit on a priority basis. That's the background to it.

It's in each area, as people know, as units become available, particularly the way our allocation process has worked and we have worked actively in downsizing and putting people into right houses, which has resulted in more re-lets and it's just the monies available. We're struggling to get the amount of units done each year. Thank you.

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY: Thank you, Joe, for that. Cathaoirleach, if I could just come in there, if you wouldn't mind? This item obviously raised some questions

at the Bray municipal district meeting because of, as Joe mentioned there, the number of units that have come in and that obviously had generated some questions so best to have those questions answered here. Cllr Grace, are you OK to come in with your queries?

CLLR MCMANUS: Thanks, Joe. I know Helena has put in a lot of work into this as well and we've had a discussion at the SPC level and it goes without saying that nobody wants to see houses boarded up and I said it at the start and I'll say it again, I really admire that you're trying to respond with the situation that you're in and make sure that as many people as possible are getting housing. I think that's all of our star points.

My reason for pushing for a wider discussion on this is that it's written down on the three pages and that's what we discussed at SPC level, but I would have some outstanding concerns about just how we're going to manage this because it is a significant change in our policy, and I think it will be the elected reps who will be held accountable for it. That's why I really think it's really important that all of us get to have a discussion on it.

Some of the key issues I guess that came up at SPC level and that have been running around my mind since is in terms of equality, we might have a problem where I know we're saying it's choice-based letting, but somebody might take a house and then they could have had a different housing allocated to them in a different area of the county that would have been better quality and how are we going to manage that? In terms of future-proofing this and risk assessing this, I'm just concerned that we might not have the detail yet written down for us where we can manage this. I know we're saying it will be inspected by a technical person but what does that mean? And what works that would have previously done -- I know kitchens and redecoration is something we were looking at. And that's fine. But how will we know exactly what's being offered out and what standards are being set and what will the recourse be if somebody is not happy, or something happens, or we're held then to account for the standard of housing that we're providing for them.

There was an issue raised on the impact on climate and I know there's fierce work going on to try to retrofit in whatever way possible our council stock. But, again, are we missing an opportunity in re-lets to make our stock more climate friendly? I think it ultimately comes down to, I know it's a funding issue and we discussed there it's been moved from capital to revenue, but what's the engagement with the department been? It seems like we're responding to, while it might seem like a positive emergency situation, it still is a situation where we don't have enough funding. So, what engagement has there been with the department, and will there be going forward? In three months, we still don't have enough money, in six months we don't have enough money, those would be my major concerns. My major reason, and I appreciate, Cathaoirleach, and Cllr Aoife bringing this to here because I think it's also elected members who will get the phone calls from people who might go forward for a house and say, oh, I thought this was going to be something different or I see somebody down the road got a much higher quality house and how are we going to manage the risks involved in such a significant policy change? Thanks, Cathaoirleach, and thanks Members.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Grace. Cllr Joe Behan, please.

CLLR BEHAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I think this is a policy change and I think it should have been brought to the councillors for a decision. If it was discussed at the SPC, SPCs only discuss policies. If a change was made, it should have been brought before us as members of Wicklow County Council and it should also specifically have been brought to Bray Municipal District because when the amalgamation happened in 2014, Bray retained a housing function. We have a housing officer. We have housing staff. And we manage the refurbishment of vacant units. So, I can see positives in this. I'm not completely, you know, averse to the idea. Cllr McManus has mentioned a few points. But I can see situations and we've all - no matter what part of the county we're living in, or we represent, there are often people on the housing list who would say, look, I'm willing to get whatever needs to be done fixed so I will have a roof over my head and there has to be some level of

flexibility with regard to that sanitary services, so I'm sure we have to do a certain amount of work for every house. I still want, the three of us, Cllr Grace McManus, Cllr Paul O'Brien and myself looked for a special meeting in Bray with the housing director for any staff on this matter, I want that, I don't want to take up the members talking about Bray, we have a housing function, it was agreed at parts of the amalgamation, and approved at the time, I insist, they come to a meeting in Bray, so we discuss the issues pertinent to Bray, so it is nice to have a discussion here in Wicklow wither' entitled to have that discussion specifically for Bray and one of the reasons is we have 30 vacant houses in Bray, in facts it is more likely to be 40, and maybe rising to 50.

Now, I'm not saying it is the fault of the director that we don't have the money to do this. It is the fault of the Government, who continually talk about bringing voids back into use, but they don't give the councils the funding to actually do the job. And I am quite suspicious about the change from funding of relets, from a capital to a current heading as was asked already by Cllr Grace McManus that happened last year, under the current acting Chief Executive, then Finance Director. I never got a really good or clear explanation as to why that change happened. Because to me it is letting the Government off the hook because it looks like we are funding the repairs through our own current income rather than getting the capital from the Government that they're bleating in day in and day out, saying they're giving money to councils to bring voids back into use, and by us, sticking it on the current side we're letting the Government off the hook and doesn't maybe who is in the Government, the department officials they're basically getting away with murder here, because, the taxpayers in Wicklow are paying to refurbish council houses that the Government are praising themselves getting back into use, so everybody suffers in that setup, unless we talk about it, we don't fix it or allocate the money that is needed to actually insure every house we allocate is up to standard. So, I think that's one of the very important issues that has arisen under this particular heading is the hypocrisy of Government saying they're bringing voids

back into use when in fact they're putting the cost on the taxpayers in Wicklow, that's not acceptable. Could I say Cathaoirleach, I'm not sure, what choice-based letting means, and I'm even less sure what the director said. Because, is it that you advertise a house number three, O'Byrne Road or wherever, and say anybody who would like to have this put in an offer and you want to be considered and are you willing to do the electrician and plumbing and everything else, what does that mean or is the next person entitled to a house of that size are they offered it, do they get time to see it and think about it, et cetera, et cetera, I don't want to waste the time of all of the members Cathaoirleach talking about this. I do want to talk about in Bray specifically because Bray has issues, big issues with all of these empty houses sitting idle and over a thousand people on the housing list. So, on that basis, Cathaoirleach I will insist we have a special meeting in Bray, but if the director wants to answer questions in the meantime, I'd be happy to hear him.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr Joe Behan.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: I might come in on the reletting the financial aspect councillor. Just to clarify the reason it was moved from capital to revenue, which was based on a recommendation from the Local Government auditor that was in previous Local Government auditor reports if you want to look at that. So that's basically, it is an accounting recommendation, in relation to it is the opinion of the Local Government auditors current expenditure rather than capital expenditure, like main tenants and should be treated accordingly. I would make the point it didn't impact what we can claim for void funding from the department. Whether it is current or capital, it is still doesn't impact on that, we can still claim what we claim under the void programme. However, as is the case for all local authorities, the majority of the funding that's provided for, relets is our own funding, it is our own resources and that does create a challenge. But we have you'd unless from the budget meetings, we've had over the years we have increased the provision to pre-letting costs year-on-year and we're up to as Joe mentioned four million of a prevision. For the coming year, but, having said that, there's still a

challenge, it doesn't cover everything, and I suppose that's the reason why, this policy has been brought in, and has been pointed out this is an issue across all five Municipal Districts not just Bray, and that would be the reason why it is looked at on a county basis, not just specific to Bray. I think, like there's figures for every Municipal District and I know from my previous district, in Wicklow, I think that had the nearly the highest spend last year on reletting so it is an issue, and obviously we'll be trying to get as much funding as we can from the department and we are allocating as much as we can from our own resources but we also have to I suppose think outside the box on this occasion and that's what the director has done to try and address the situation and to reduce the number of voids sitting around the county. So, I'll pass on to the Director of Housing just to answer other questions.

JOE: Just two things, one is, it is not a policy change, the letting is in the priority has been there for the last 2014, so it is in the choice letting scheme. And the second one this is the repercussions or result of the budgets adopted budget so it is because of the sheer volume of units that, it is slightly more representative in the Bray area, but each area will be affected because we're delivering more units than we ever did, and ever designed and yes, we rarely agree but you're right there's a repercussion is that the relets come in quicker and this is a way to get them out. We're not giving out unsafe houses or looking for people to fix any electrician or any plumbing, what we're saying S we're not putting in new kitchens or not doing that, because works and others, we normally do relets if people wants the houses, otherwise they'll sit for longer on our just basically because of the monies that is available and made it clear they can't above any level I've gone in the past. Is that correct Breda, yes. Choice is basically Cllr Joe Behan, implied there, yes, the houses will be put and see who are interested in those particular houses and then we work off that. Some people won't be interested in those. But, it does affect each area, that's why, it's if you bring the Bray logic, you would have to discuss in five areas, because, each area are

getting houses in the next last year next year and has implication on our budgets so we don't want, we want minimum amount of units sitting there, until it goes to next year, like we had to do last year. The last question is with the department, there is the void scheme with the department, that's due in the next two or three weeks, SPC, allocation we've applied for there, and allocation we will be getting but rough figures, the expenditure in for relets, is 3,750,000. That's for the budget. I've been informed by finance, if we get more than that, under voids, it will be able to go up over 8 million. Fabric upgrade is from a different heading, we would prioritise some units but again the difficulty fabric upgrade money is, is a lot of conditions and you're looking for schemes rather than one-off houses because that dilutes the money, we will look at it and try to keep them in mind when we're applying for fabric upgrade money but the difficulty is that you're trying to do a trench of fabric upgrades together for efficiency rather than one-off, it doesn't work that easy.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

Thank you very much. We have Cllr Dermot O'Brien.

CLLR DERMOT O'BRIEN: I won't take too long; I look forward to the conversation in Bray as well. But just, and can I start by saying I know there is every intention across everyone has that is responsibility for housing, whether it is an elected member, people in the housing staff, that nobody wants boarded up houses and everyone wants relets to be done as quickly, efficiently and to the highest standard possible. So, I think what is unfortunate is that we're in a scenario where finance is the subject of the issue. And that's what is holding us back. And I think for me, what we must do ultimately is have collective ownership of a new procedure that's rolling out of choice base letting is coming into the scheme of things, we have to collectively own that, and that's where it is so valuable and important to express our concerns. What I don't want is to have a two-tier housing standards model where some people are looking at Jimmy down the road who has totally better housing set up than I have just because I managed to get mine a year

later than he got his, so, and not saying that's going to be the case, but we have to be guarded against, how this plays out. So that we can stand over all the decisions along the way and be accountable for them and there's something in there for me, what do we promise our tenants, these are tenants, our tenants as a local authority. And when we look at, we can look at quarter of a million Euro dropped on the seafront in Bray for a glorified gazebo it is hard to reconcile with our constituents that, you have to now be consider to taking a down-graded option for your housing allocation, than anyone else would have got in the last number of years and we have to again own that reality, in a way that we can stand over. I think some of that is about exhausting every option and being sure we've done that. Because we're still asking for rent from those people and again, they might be wondering am I paying the same rent as someone else but not getting the same standard. So really, I appreciate what the chief has said in terms we got the wrestle with this, and take this on and think outside the box and I think there's something, about how we can justify that we've looked at the tendering model and the contractors, we've looked at the all the option that is are available so that when we get to the point where we are standing over this, that we do it collectively, as councillors and not be maybe scoring points off each other or taking pot shots at what we agree, we have to own the decision and if the reality is that, the finances are challenged then we have to wrestle with that reality. But I think, when we also look at the wider societal issue, we know that adverse childhood experiences in poorer housing are the bill is picked up by society ultimately when that plays out as well so we really have to be zooming in on what we're offering and there's something, the last thing I'd say, that I think the goodwill is there one million percent and we have to maybe stand over the paper trail of that, transparency of that, how we collectively own that, what procedures are in place to say I'm this house is OK to give out now and if anyone has a question mark about it, come and ask about it, because it is documented and logged and they're the type of decisions we have to navigate towards so that we can, if we have to make this work that we make it work



rather than turn our back on tax-payer thanks  
Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr John Snell.

CLLR SNELL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I will be brief as I can.

Look this has been discussed at SPC level on a number of occasions. I did ask the members to bring it back to the political groupings, to independents to the Municipal Districts and share as wide as possible because while I welcome Bray wanting to have a discussion on it and I think you should, I think Municipal District should have a discussion on it, and the reality is it is not a Bray issue, it is a County Wicklow issue. So over four million there to be spent on relets, and the reality is that the officials were being proactive and rather than being guarded and putting issues out there that is possibly not issues at all, they were actually trying to be proactive on this and steer away from when we get to the end of the year, we run out of money for relets. At the tail end of the year, as has happened in previous years, so there's a wider debate whether we get enough funding or where the funding comes from, but reality is, this is a good news story, you know, an awful lot of people that I know, would actually say to me, they didn't want the house painted Magnolia from top to bottom. That the majority of them actually got their moving in grant and they want to paint the bedroom pink or blue or whatever the case might be, and it would have saved them a number of weeks in regard to having the relet works done. I want the message to go out here loud and clear Cathaoirleach that Wicklow County Council will not be giving out houses that are faulty in regard to electrical, plumbing, heating, all of those are a given that all those will be checked and brought up to the modern building regulations. What we're talking about is cosmetics works. And I'm hounded day in and day out of people who want to accept a house, in the condition it is, and they can't have the house in the condition it is without those necessary works that I spoke about, taking place. But, from a cosmetic point of view, the council are trying to speed up the process, choice-based letting

has been rolled out in this county and was in Dunlavin and in the process in Wicklow as we speak, and everyone has a choice when they're offered a house, they get a number of days whether they want to accept or refuse. I find about choice-based letting what will happen is the people who are depending where the house is, it is the people who are not on the housing list a terribly long time will put themselves forward to try and jump the queue. And that's their prerogative because that's what choice-based letting is about, the people on it a long time will put their hand up and say no, I'll wait for the new houses that are coming down the line. The reality is, that we already have people making choices as we speak, there's people there who will not accept a house in various estates, will not accept social local authority housing, they want the houses as part of the 10% of the new builds. Every public representative that's spoken or listening in, knows that the truth. But I wouldn't cast everyone on a waiting list the same, there is people out there, and more so now than ever want notice to quit and looking to get a stable roof over their head. But the reality is, that what should be a good news story that, we're providing so many units that we're now in a position where we can address people's needs, and everyone on the social housing waiting list is people in a local authority house are meant to get a house that meets their needs. If you're in a local authority house and it doesn't meet your needs for whatever reason, we now are in a position where we can upsize them or downsize them and if that creates a relet so be it, we deal with that and someone else will benefit from that. And that's my feeling on it so, have all the discussions in Municipal District but don't send out negative message on something that is positive. There's been hundreds of houses produced in each Municipal District and more to come, so, keep it positive, thanks Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy.

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY: Look for the opportunity to come back in on it, I fully agree with Cllr John Snell this is an amazing opportunity. We've all had people who have looked to have make contact with us directly, offered to take on units that are void, the relet time is long, and

it costs a lot of money. I think it is really disappointing that some people have suggested that inadequate or substandard or two-tier housing is being offered. That's absolutely not the case. As Cllr John Snell mentioned the houses are painted from top to bottom in Magnolia and people are going back in and they're repainting it themselves and that's a waste of time and a waste of money. The house will be checked over to make sure that it is in a proper standard and good condition so any suggestion that, that was being done isn't fair. Choice-based letting is in operation with lots of local authority not just Wicklow as Cllr John Snell mentioned, and south Dublin County council has been doing it for a long time, really, really positive. It is paper base as well and amazing practice how it is managed and that's really good. I have to note as well, that the comment in relation to glorified gazebo, I think that's really unfair Cllr Paul O'Brien that's a totally separate matter. This is housing we're discussing here, and I think, we can - Cllr Dermot O'Brien. But when this comes to people notice to quilt and calling to yourself and myself and other councillors, we need to stay focused at the item at hand.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Cllr Miriam Murphy, you had your hand up.

Miriam are you there. You're on mute.

Gone OK. Lorraine wants to come in there.

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, Cathaoirleach, it is in relation to the outdoor performance base that Cllr Dermot O'Brien mentioned, just no clarity the 250,000 euros is coming from the Department of Arts Culture and Gaeltacht it would never be available for relets and other houses uses and balance would be coming from development contribution, just to make that clarity and we look forward to presenting the artist drawing or the architect's drawing and consulting with the community throughout the whole process, thanks again.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks Lorraine.

I'm not going to get to the Chief Executive's Report.

So, could we say that is noted and if any questions e-mail to the different directors, would that be OK.

CLLR MURPHY: I'm back.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Miriam Murphy you wanted to come in there.

CLLR MURPHY: Yeah, two things.

On the issues of the Bray situation there, I think we all have to be aware of this. It would be interesting to see what each district, what the communication would be like, and you know what numbers we have to offer. What really annoys me is, the situation of putting people on the list for many years will receive HAP and living in dire, dire conditions, and just nothing being done about it as well. And would never have been in the position financially to even look at something like this, this is something we have to look into as well. But you know it can be positive. But, also, I hope that some of the will be encouraged to be fully accessible for people with disabilities on the housing lists for many years and mental health problems as well on the housing list. But we look forward to it. I suppose in your districts, but I say a point that I think is strongly needs to be made, this is where the link of communication is missed, from having each of us housing section in our district. I think it is a big loss

Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr Miriam Murphy. OK. Chief Executive's Report will be on the April's meeting is that OK with everybody?

Just going to go on to correspondents.

I think we've one piece of correspondents

HELEN: Just we received e-mail today in relation to an online conference which is occurring tomorrow. Between 11-12.30, details have been circulated owl elected members and it is in relation to Local Government's unite for welfare and peace, relating to the Ukraine. And

also, then to remind the elected members that the County Development Plan meeting that we're having starts at 10.00 next Monday 28th. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. I'm looking at the motions I don't think there's any councillors here we can go forward with the motions is there, we have seven minutes

CLLR MURPHY: You're there.

CATHAOIRLEACH: You haven't got your seconder, Cllr Miriam Murphy.

Excuse me, this is my debut OK. Forgive me.

HELEN: First motion is notice motion in the name of Cllr Anne Ferris seconded by Cllr Paul O'Brien and both are present. Yeah.

It is the policy of Wicklow County Council not to purchase goods or services produced or provided in whole or part, as practicable from illegally Occupied Territories by illegal settlers and that any such contracts should cease as soon as allowed. I did read out the full response last time, if I read it again the six minutes will be gone. If Cllr Anne Ferris wants to go ahead on it.

CLLR FERRIS: Cathaoirleach, can I just say I presume we're finished up at 5.30, this is exactly what happened the last time we reached the motion with about three or four or five minutes to spare. And people obviously showed an interest they wanted to speak on it. And indeed, you know, I have a lot more I want to say on it as well. I have been in touch with the Palestinian ambassador to Ireland and in relation to this motion, so, I really don't think with five minute toss spare, it is not giving enough time to this very important motion. We took an emergency motion a few weeks ago, which was tabled by Cllr John Mullen and councillor O'Brien in relation to the Ukraine situation, that was taken on the 7th of March, you know there's an awful lot to be said

and huge similarities between what is happening in Palestine, and what is happening in Ukraine but I don't want in any sense or means, I know Cllr John Snell mentioned this at our last meeting as well, to conflate the two of them. So, I'm happy, if this is left on the agenda for a meeting in April, and to be taken again as the first item. If that's all right with you Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: That's OK with me, and I apologise I wasn't trying to rush anybody, but I had a few minutes and trying to get a motion in. And to be fair to everybody I don't want to rush anybody's motion. Who is next?

HELEN: Just to confirm, Cllr Anne Ferris it will be the first motion, not the first item on the agenda.

CLLR FERRIS: First motion.

HELEN: Cllr Mags Crean isn't present, so skip past two and three, which is notice of motion in the name of Cllr Edward Timmins who is present. And Cllr Vincent Blake who is not present so if we have a different seconder.

Cllr Joe Behan seconding that, so that's no problem and the motion, is this council supports people on a disability allowance to purchase their homes from the council with current legislation this is not allow the. Housing directorate is terms and conditions for set out in purchase scheme are laid out in the housing and miscellaneous provisions act 2014 and Wicklow County Council operate within this scheme and have no ...

CLLR FERRIS: We can't hear.

>>: Just outrageous situation that someone on the disability can't buy their house because their income is below a certain threshold and the reason given is that if they buy the house, they won't have the financial resources to maintain the property. So that's a stupid argument because, a lot of the people who come to me who want to do it, saying they don't maintain their house in

any case, and recently the Government brought in a rule where pensioners on the state pension could buy out their council house, even they're on a fixed low income as well. These people have been discriminated against, and I know the council say follow the rule or whatever, it is comes from the department and I got a standard bureaucratic response as well, can I make a quick proposal we write to the minister, relevant minister, and ask them could they reconsider restriction on people with disabilities from purchasing their own house. Like it's disgraceful. I'd say if I went on Joe Duffy, it would be changed fairly quickly, just to say, put a proposal that write to the minister and ask people on disability income have the opportunity to purchase their houses and not disallowed from doing so.

CLLR FERRIS: Agreed.

HELEN: Are you seconding that, Cllr Anne Ferris.

CLLR FERRIS: Yes. Agreed.

CATHAOIRLEACH: 29 minutes past five on my watch. So, members, thank you very much for bearing with me. And I hope I haven't offended anybody or left anyone out.

CLLR MURPHY: You didn't get to my motion!

CATHAOIRLEACH: Members next Monday, 10.00, and as I said earlier on in the meeting, please God Shay will be back. Thank you. Bye-bye.